DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 389 909 CE 070 428

AUTHOR Forrester, K. P.; And Others
TITLE Training Matters: Vocational Education and Training in the Retail Sector.
INSTITUTION Leeds Univ. (England). Dept. of Adult and Continuing Education.
REPORT NO ISBN-0-907644-07-4
PUB DATE Jan 95
NOTE 78p.; Funded by the Distributive Industries Training Trust and the Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers.
AVAILABLE FROM Department of Adult Continuing Education, University of Leeds, Leeds LS2 9JT, England, United Kingdom.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC04 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Access to Education; Delivery Systems; *Distributive Education; Educational Attitudes; *Educational Opportunities; *Employee Attitudes; Females; Foreign Countries; *Industrial Training; Part Time Employment; Program Effectiveness; *Retailing; *Training Methods; Training Objectives
IDENTIFIERS *United Kingdom

ABSTRACT

Available vocational education and training in the United Kingdom's retail sector were examined in an employee-centered study during which data were collected primarily from two sources: questionnaires completed by 1,974 from a random sample of approximately 6,000 British retail employees who were surveyed, and semistructured face-to-face interviews conducted with 115 retail shop workers by 15 interviewers. The questionnaires and interviews focused on the types and extent of available training, its perceived value, the relationship between training delivery and effectiveness, access of different groups to training, and shop workers' training aspirations. On average, the respondents received a total of 5.75 days of training with their current employer or approximately 1 day per year of service. Workers were generally positive about the training they received; however, two-thirds stated that their training had little or no effect on their job performance. Store managers' attitudes had a critical effect on the value workers gave to training. Women and part-time workers had less access to training than did males and full-time employees. Shop workers desired more training, including job-specific, occupational, and employee development training. (Information concerning the study methodology is appended. Contains 29 figures and 18 references.) (MN)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 389 909

Training Matters

Vocational education and training in the retail sector

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

DITT
Distributive Industries Training Trust

Usdaw
UNITY IS STRENGTH

CE070428

Foreword

Bill Connor
Deputy General Secretary
Usdaw

For many years, Usdaw has campaigned for more and better vocational training for shopworkers. Recently, there has been a multitude of Government training initiatives and programmes. Each new initiative has been launched in a blaze of publicity. This hype often seemed to contradict the experience of shop workers who felt there was too little training and that much of the training that did take place was too job or company specific.

To find out what was really happening, Usdaw applied for, and received, a grant from the Distributive Industries Training Trust. We then contracted Leeds University to research the shop workers' experience of vocational training on our behalf.

This Report is the conclusion of the research done by Leeds University. The views in the Report are those of the research team and theirs alone. However, I believe it makes significant points that all who work in the retail sector, or in the training world, will find valuable. I know of no other research that has so thoroughly sought the views of those on the receiving end of vocational training – the shopfloor worker.

Usdaw is committed to continuing to promote vocational training. In order to take full advantage of the Report, Usdaw has a nationally organised programme of briefings for Usdaw officers to help them promote vocational training amongst members and companies alike and our 1995 Annual Delegate Meeting will debate a major policy statement on Training.

In conclusion, I would like to thank the Distributive Industries Training Trust for the support they have given this research. Without their support it would have been impossible to have gone ahead. I would also like to thank the companies, the Usdaw officers and representatives who helped the research team by distributing and collecting questionnaires. Again, I can say, without their assistance the project could not have taken place. Finally, I would like to thank the Leeds University research team. This Report is theirs and they deserve the credit for this important piece of work.

Summary of key findings

Introduction

The background to this Report is the widespread recognition that compared with its economic competitors the British work force is under-educated, under-trained and under-qualified. If Britain is to break out of its 'low skill equilibrium' the retail sector must greatly improve the vocational education and training it provides for its work force.

While much research focuses on Government policies or employer-determined training strategies and practices this Report is employee-centred, focusing on retail workers' experiences of vocational education and training.

How much training?

Chapter 1 examines how much training shop workers receive. The key findings are:

- Shop workers receive on average a total of 5.75 days' training with their current employer.
- In relation to length of service, shop workers receive about 1 day of training per year of service.
- There is a wide variation in the amount of training shop workers receive from one company to another.
- There is a wide variation between the amounts of training shop workers receive, even when doing the same job, within the same company.
- This level of training is considerably less than that identified in the Department of Employment *Training in Britain* survey. The differences may, in part, be explained by the gap that exists between Head Office training policies and what actually happens in practice at the store level.
- It is difficult to see how the levels of training identified in our survey can result in a widespread uptake of The Retail Certificate Level 2 S/NVQs that are deemed the equivalent of 4 GCSEs at grades A - C.

The value of training

Chapter 2 assesses how useful or valuable employees find the training they receive in terms of improving their job performance and their own personal development. The key findings are:

- While shop workers' general attitude to the training they receive is positive, detailed questioning reveals a more complex picture.
- Some types of training are better rated than others: Checkout training is very positively rated but Customer Care training is less appreciated.
- Two thirds of shop workers said their training made little or no difference to improving their job performance.
- Half of the shop workers said their training made no difference to improving their own personal/career development.
- In contrast, those shop workers who had been involved in the S/NVQ scheme were much more positive about how their training improved their job performance.
- Shop workers who had been involved in the S/NVQ scheme were also much more positive about how their training had improved their personal/career development.

What affects training?

Chapter 3 looks at how the delivery of training affects shop workers' rating of their training. The key findings are:

- The store manager's attitude is critical to the value shop workers give to their training; where the store manager/company is seen to be disinterested in training it is rated more poorly by shop workers.
- Most training is 'front-loaded'. It takes place on appointment or very shortly afterwards. There is very little on-going training.
- Where training is 'front-loaded' the value and effectiveness of the training is reduced.
- The survey suggests that most professional trainers are of a high standard; the quality of the trainer makes a great difference to the rating shop workers give to their training.
- Videos have become a major method of delivering training. Our survey suggests they are not greatly valued by shop workers.
- The certification of training is highly valued by shop workers. Where training was certificated it was more highly rated. The most frequently mentioned certificate was for food hygiene training.

Equal access to training?

Chapter 4 examines the amount of training women and part-time workers receive. The key findings are:

- Women have less access to training than men, even when they are doing the same job.
- Part-time workers have less access to training than full-time colleagues.

Employee development?

Chapter 5 examines the training aspirations of shop workers. It confirms other surveys demonstrating that shop workers are positive about opportunities for vocational education and training. The key findings are:

- Shop workers want more training.
- Shop workers would value several additional types of training such as job specific training, occupational training and employee development training.
- The researchers identified a need for adult and basic skills training covering reading, writing and basic numeracy.
- In conclusion, the Report states that retail employers have much to gain from adopting the 'learning organisation' approach (such as the Investors in People programme) in partnership with shop workers and their trade unions.

Contents

FOREWORD		1
SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS		3
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS		9
PREFACE		10
ABBREVIATIONS		11
LIST OF FIGURES		12
INTRODUCTION		15
	The national training context	16
	Vocational education and training in the retail sector	17
	Employee-centred approach	18
	Outline of the contents of the Report	19
	Research methodology	21
CHAPTER 1	**The extent of vocational education and training**	23
1.1	Introduction	24
1.2	Amounts of training	24
1.7	Training in different stores	28
1.11	Training in one company	30
1.14	Factors influencing the level of training	32
1.15	Training in different occupations	34
1.16	Different training subjects	34
1.24	Additional training courses	38
1.26	Conclusion	39

CHAPTER 2	**Shop workers' views on the value of their training**	*41*
2.1	Introduction	*42*
2.3	General attitudes towards training	*42*
2.4	Training and job performance	*44*
2.6	Training and personal development	*46*
2.10	Training and S/NVQs	*48*
2.14	Conclusion	*51*
CHAPTER 3	**The delivery of training**	*53*
3.1	Introduction	*54*
3.2	Management attitudes towards training	*54*
3.4	Front-loaded training	*56*
3.6	The trainer	*57*
3.8	Training methods	*59*
3.10	Certification of training	*61*
3.11	Conclusion	*61*
CHAPTER 4	**Equal access to vocational education and training?**	*63*
4.1	Introduction	*64*
4.2	Gender and training	*65*
4.5	Part-time working and training	*67*
4.7	Conclusion	*69*
CHAPTER 5	**Vocational education and training and employee development**	*71*
5.1	Introduction	*72*
5.2	Suggestions for future training	*72*
5.7	From job training to employee development	*75*
5.8	Conclusion	*76*
APPENDIX 1	**Research methodology**	*77*
REFERENCES		*81*

Acknowledgements

The research team gratefully acknowledges the grant from the Distributive Industries Training Trust (DITT) that made this research programme possible.

The research team also acknowledges the additional financial contributions and support from the Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers (Usdaw) and the Department of Adult Continuing Education (DACE) at the University of Leeds.

This research could not have been carried out without the active support and encouragement of Usdaw's retail sector members and full - time officers. In particular, we would like to thank the Union's Deputy General Secretary, Bill Connor and the National Education Officer, James Rees. A number of non-union retail employees participated in our survey and we are grateful for their contribution.

We would also like to thank the members of the project management team for their support. The team included: D C Crouch, Trust Secretary, Distributive Industries Training Trust; E Hill, Qualifications and ITO Branch, Training, Education and Enterprise Directorate, Employment Department; A Thomas, Partnership Manager, British Retail Consortium.

Finally, the researchers also thank those employers who saw the value of this research and provided the facilities needed to carry out the survey.

Preface

In 1991 the Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers (Usdaw) made a formal application to the Distributive Industries Training Trust (DITT) to fund a project designed to promote vocational education and training (VET) in the retail sector. The DITT supported the application and the University of Leeds was contracted to carry out a 3 year research and training programme with the following primary aims:

- to identify shop workers' attitudes towards VET with particular reference to their experience of training programmes and to their training needs;
- to develop an action programme and training materials designed to assist union officers to promote vocational education and training in retailing.

This Report presents the results of the research into shop workers' experiences of and attitudes towards their vocational education and training. The Report is written primarily for those involved in developing VET policies and practices in the retail sector, both within companies and the trade unions.

An Executive Summary giving the main points arising out of this survey is available from the Distributive Industries Training Trust, the University of Leeds and the Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers.

The research team has prepared a Technical Report which contains further detailed information arising from the survey. For copies and or specific pieces of data contact the research team at the Department of Adult Continuing Education at the University of Leeds.

The views contained in this Report are those of the research team.

Reproduction in whole or in part of the contents of this publication is authorised for all non-commercial educational purposes, provided the source is acknowledged. All rights reserved with regard to commercial reproduction.

Abbreviations

ALBSU	Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit
BRC	British Retail Consortium
CBI	Confederation of British Industry
DACE	Department of Adult Continuing Education
DITB	Distributive Industries Training Board
DITT	Distributive Industries Training Trust
DOSC	Distributive Occupational Standards Council
EC	European Commission of the European Union
IiP	Investors in People
LEC	Local Enterprise Councils (Scotland)
NETTs	National Education and Training Targets
NRTC	National Retail Training Council
SVQs	Scottish Vocational Qualification,
	National Vocational Qualification (England and Wales)
TECs	Training and Enterprise Councils (England and Wales)
TEED	Training Education Enterprise Directorate, Employment Department
Usdaw	Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers
VET	Vocational Education and Training

List of Figures

Figure 1 Total length of training during employment with current employer

Figure 2 Training per year of service

Figure 3 Days' training per employee in different industries in 1986-87

Figure 4 Total length of training: comparing 4 large supermarket companies

Figure 5 Checkout operators training: comparing 2 large supermarket companies

Figure 6 Checkout operators, all types of training: a large supermarket company

Figure 7 Checkout operators till training: a large supermarket company

Figure 8 Customer care training: a large supermarket company

Figure 9 Training and the effects of different shifts: shop workers receiving only half a day or less training

Figure 10 Percent of staff in 10 retail occupations receiving more than 5 days' total training

Figure 11 Percent of staff receiving each training subject

Figure 12 Length of food hygiene training courses

Figure 13 The value of training

Figure 14 The effects of training on job performance

Figure 15 Checkout operators and sales assistants: attitudes towards jobs following training

Figure 16 Training and promotion

Figure 17 Training and promotion for 3 occupational groups

Figure 18 Training and job mobility

Figure 19 Percent saying training had a major impact on job performance: whole sample and S/NVQs compared

Figure 20 Training and promotion: whole sample and S/NVQs compared

Figure 21 Training and job mobility: whole sample and S/NVQs compared

Figure 22 Feeling able to do job better following training: the effect of managerial attitudes

Figure 23 Being more confident in the job following training: the effect of managerial attitudes

Figure 24 The timing of training: percent of staff receiving training in the same year they started work with employer

Figure 25 The most commonly reported teaching methods

Figure 26 Evaluation of commonly used teaching methods

Figure 27 Training per year of service: gender and occupational groups

Figure 28 Gender and percent of staff in 3 occupations receiving only up to half a day's training per year of service

Figure 29 Training per year of service: full-time and part-time shop workers

Introduction

Training matters - Vocational education and training in the retail sector

The national training context

Vocational Education and Training (VET) has long been an issue of national significance and there is little doubt that it will remain an area of increasing importance for Government policy in the 1990s. Investment in education and training is seen as crucial to the long-term success of the national economy and to the future prospects of generations of working people. For some observers, the skills and adaptability of the work force are an important determinant, if not the major factor, in the country's economic competitive performance. The main political parties, employer organisations and the trade unions are at one in recognising this link between good quality VET and national economic prosperity.

Given the strength of these views it is significant that much of the evidence accumulated over the last decade points to a major skills gap between Britain and its economic competitors. In the mid-1980s not only were Britain's employers spending a mere 0.15% of turnover per employee on training compared with the 3% average of the leading companies in the USA, Japan and Germany, but most of this training expenditure was concentrated on supervisory and managerial staff (Keep 1989).

According to the European Commission (EC 1990) the UK is an *"exception amongst the developed industrial economies in the low level of qualification of its population"*, whilst The Confederation of British Industry (CBI 1989) concluded that compared to our international competitors, the British work force is *"under-educated, under-trained and under-qualified"*.

Government concern about Britain's inadequate VET provision has prompted a number of major policy initiatives in recent years. These include the introduction of a new system of National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) in England and Wales and the Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs); the establishment of Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs), Local Enterprise Councils (LECS) in Scotland; the Investors in People (IiP) programme and the National Education and Training Targets (NETTs).

The latter, first proposed by the CBI in 1991, are now supported by Government, employers, education bodies and trade unions, and are widely accepted as measures of the progress made towards developing an adaptable, highly skilled and qualified work force. Taken together, these initiatives provide the potential for a national and unified framework of vocational education and training which no sector of the economy, including retailing, can ignore.

Vocational education and training in the retail sector

In monetary and employment terms the retail sector plays a major role in the UK economy. It experienced a turnover of £148.3 billion in 1993, and about 40p in every £1 of consumer expenditure passes through the industry's tills. In employment terms, retailing accounts for approximately 1 in 10 of the entire working population with a labour force of about 2.4 million people, the majority of whom are women working part-time. The economic significance of retailing combined with the size, composition and character of its work force, make the sector strategically important in the national training debate. It is likely, therefore, that the VET policies and practices adopted by major retail employers will have a profound impact on national training initiatives and contribute to the consolidation of, or the break from, Britain's 'low skill equilibrium' (Finegold 1992, Glynn & Gospel 1993).

Until the establishment of the Distributive Occupational Standards Council (DOSC) in 1994 the primary responsibility for developing adequate training arrangements for the retail sector as a whole lay with the National Retail Training Council (NRTC). Established after the abolition of the Distributive Industries Training Board (DITB) in 1982, the NRTC supported the Government's National Vocation Qualification (NVQ) initiatives and it developed 'The Retail Certificate' which was one of the first NVQs (at levels 1 and 2) to be launched. The Retail Certificate was the result of collaboration between employer interests, educationalists and the Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers (Usdaw), the main union organising in retailing. From its launch, however, support for the retail NVQs amongst retail employers has been lukewarm and the vast majority of non-managerial and non-supervisory retail employees still have no recognised vocational qualifications.

The extremely low incidence of recognised vocational qualifications amongst retail employees does not necessarily reflect the amount or quality of training provided since most major retailers have well developed training facilities and personnel and provide in-house training. The problem is that it is difficult to assess both the extent and value of this training. Recognising this difficulty, Usdaw supported the introduction of retailing NVQs as a means for developing systematic quality training for all employees and as a foundation stone for a coherent training strategy and practice for the sector as a whole.

The Union also produced a major policy document (Usdaw, 1991) outlining proposals for a comprehensive training strategy for the 1990s and the 21st century. It defined training widely as being *"about enabling people to identify their* ***own*** *needs, make choices, develop aptitudes, improve and update skills, get promotion, change careers, or just pursue and develop an enthusiasm . . . for self development in* ***or*** *out of the workplace."* (Usdaw 1991:6). Arguing for a broadly based and accessible training, Usdaw identified a number of levels and kinds of VET: basic occupational training designed to develop transferable skills; on-going, up-date training to help workers cope with rapid changes; development training to enhance promotion or career change opportunities; training for people re-entering the labour market and personal development training. (Usdaw 1991:7-8). This policy statement reflects the determination of the Union to play a major role in developing a quality VET provision for retail employees in the UK.

Employee-centred approach

Much VET literature tends to focus on Government policy initiatives or on employer-determined training strategies and practices. The motivation, aspirations and experiences of employees are often ignored or sidelined. All too often, training tends to be assessed exclusively in terms of outcomes determined by employers. Little attention is given to whether the training provided meets the needs that employees themselves identify, or whether it increases their job satisfaction and their aspirations for career development within the company or the sector. This Report is *employee-centred*, concerned with the VET experiences and attitudes of employees. The Report is predominantly focused on non-managerial and non-supervisory employees; part of the 'missing millions' of the UK work force who tend to be unqualified, relatively under-educated and with only the most limited access to VET opportunities.

The reason for this approach is not simply that shop workers' views and experiences of VET have been under-researched. It also reflects our view that any solution for the widely documented quantity and quality limitations of vocational education and training in the UK requires the involvement and active participation of employees and trade unions working in conjunction with employers. The failure to develop, in employees, a recognition of their own potential and personal worth, coupled with a lack of strategies to develop that potential is, we would argue, the single most important structural weakness of past and current efforts designed to improve workplace learning opportunities and qualifications.

Outline of the contents of the Report

Chapter 1 of the Report is concerned with identifying how much training shop workers receive and the types of training currently used in the sector. It provides estimates of the average length of shop workers' vocational training and explains why these estimates challenge those contained in previous research. Chapter 1 also highlights the fact that, in the absence of industry-wide guidelines or minimum standards, the quantity of training varies widely both between companies and within companies and it identifies some of the factors influencing the variations in the levels of training provided. Finally, the chapter briefly comments on the main training subjects currently offered by retail employers.

Chapter 2 breaks new ground by trying to assess how useful or valuable employees find the training which they receive. The chapter provides an analysis of the value shop workers placed on their training experience in general and how useful they felt it was for the performance of their jobs and for their career and personal development. The evidence presented suggests that although shop workers are positive about the notion of training and generally welcome any kind of training, many are negative about the value of the actual training received. Only a minority of our sample thought that training greatly improved their job performance and fewer thought it greatly improved their promotion prospects or their labour market mobility. Finally, the chapter indicates that shop workers with experience of the nationally recognised S/NVQ accredited training programmes and assessment procedures were much more positive about training and their job and career prospects.

Chapter 3 examines how retailing VET is delivered. It looks at some of the factors which employees identified as influencing their perception of how useful or valuable they found their training. The chapter comments on a wide range of issues, including: the effect on shop workers of their company and store training culture and workers' assessment of their trainers and of the teaching methods commonly used in the sector to deliver VET.

Chapter 4 examines the issue of who gets access to the retail VET that is provided. A number of other studies have demonstrated that access to VET throughout all sectors of the British economy is unequal and is influenced by such factors as gender, part-time hours, educational qualifications, employment status and grade. This chapter shows that the retail sector conforms to this general pattern. Due to the overall low quantity of VET provided to retail employees the differences of access we identify are not large. Nevertheless, the evidence of our survey suggests that, even where they are in the same jobs:

- part-time workers receive less training than full-timers,
- women workers receive less training than male workers.

As part-time workers tend to receive less training than full-time workers the increasingly part-time nature of retail employment will exacerbate the existing tension between casualised employment and the efforts being made to extend good quality, recognised VET throughout the retail sector.

Chapter 5 links retailing's VET to the wider debate about training and employee development. It deals with shop workers' training aspirations and indicates that there is a widespread demand for not only greater amounts of training, but also more comprehensive training and that which promotes personal development. Shop workers' training aspirations not only suggests that their existing VET is inadequate and narrowly job specific but also that employers are failing to recognise and use the full potential of their employees. The chapter concludes by arguing that both employers and employees have a tremendous amount to gain from improvements to the retail sectors' training provision and that the only really effective way to break out of the industry's own 'low skill equilibrium' is for employers to enter into partnership with their employees and their trade union to develop the VET programmes needed.

Research methodology

This Report is based primarily on research into shop workers' experiences of vocational education and training received from their current employer. The research was conducted during April – December 1993. It involved the completion of a detailed postal questionnaire and semi-structured interviews with retail employees. Usdaw members in retailing as well as non-union shop staff completed and returned questionnaires and were interviewed. The questionnaire was designed primarily in collaboration with groups of shop workers and was distributed by Usdaw and those companies actively participating in the survey. The bulk of the interviews were conducted by shop workers who received special training in interviewing techniques from the research team. 1,974 postal questionnaires were completed and returned and 115 semi-structured interviews were carried out. The questionnaire returns indicate that the survey sample broadly reflects the gender and part - time working characteristics of the retail sector as a whole. The characteristics of the sample in this survey are also in line with those of the ***Institute of Manpower Studies No. 238*** (1993) report on training based on six companies in the retail sector. A fuller description and explanation of the research methodology underpinning this Report is contained in Appendix 1.

Chapter 1

The extent of vocational education and training

Introduction

1.1

In order to understand the VET experiences of retail employees it is first necessary to examine the extent and variety of the training which they actually receive. Knowing the baseline of training within the sector allows us to compare the amount of training that takes place in different parts of the industry and how it compares with other sectors. Moreover, in our opinion, it provides a measure to set against the requirements of the retail sector's own emerging standards encapsulated in the retail S/NVQ – The Retail Certificate. This chapter, therefore, examines the amount of training shop workers receive from their current employer. It looks at what type of training is provided, how much time is given to each subject and who receives this training.

Amounts of training

1.2

In order to assess the extent and variety of training received by retail employees, we identified the 11 most common subjects covered in company training programmes. These were identified by discussions with shop workers, training managers and trade union full-time officers. The 11 training subjects were:

- induction,
- administration/general office,
- cash handling,
- cash office,
- checkout or till,
- computer,
- customer care,
- food hygiene,
- how to sell,
- product knowledge,
- product recognition.

We listed these subjects in our questionnaire and asked shop workers how much time they spent on each of these 11 separate areas of training. Using their questionnaire replies we were able to calculate that, irrespective of the length of their service, shop workers received an average of approximately 34 hours' vocational education and training from their current employer.

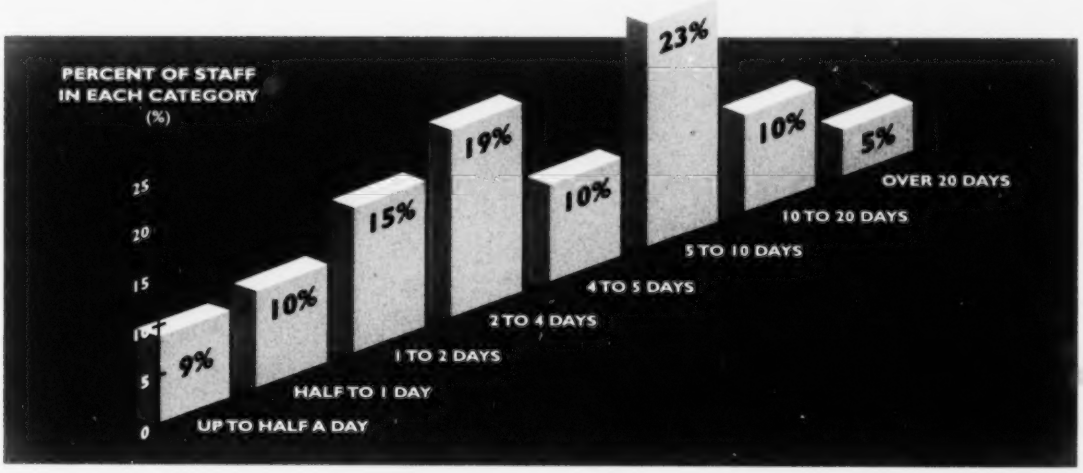
Taking a day's training to equal 6 hours this means that:

a shop worker received on average about 5.75 days' total training during the lifetime of their employment with their current employer.

1.3

It is important to note that this average of 5.75 days' total training per shop worker incorporates a considerable range of training provision. For example, as *Figure 1* shows, 19% of shop workers received a total of 1 day or less training throughout the lifetime of their employment with their employer and almost 53% received 4 days or less.

Figure 1 ***Total length of training during employment with current employer***



1.4

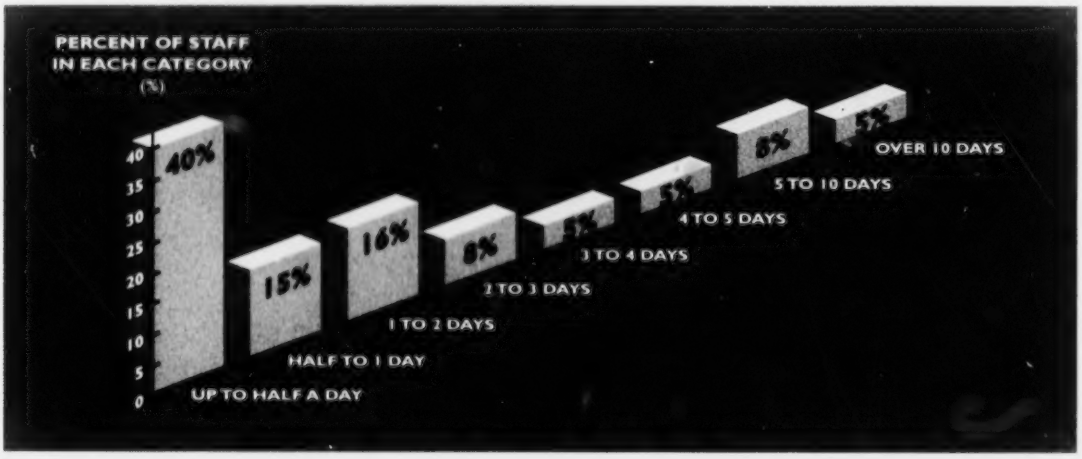
Another way of understanding the amount of training shop workers received is to relate it to the length of their service with their current employer. In the overall survey the average length of service was just over 6.1 years. Women shop workers tended to have longer periods of service, an average of 6.3 years, than their male colleagues who had an average of 5.8 years' service. The length of service varied according to occupation. For example, shelf replenishers had an average of 4.5 years' service, checkout operators almost 6 years, butchers 8.4 years and store managers 16 years' service.

The amount of training per year of service indicates that:

a shop worker received on average just under 1 day's training for each year of service.

It is important to note that the actual amount of VET provided for each year of service also varies considerably. For example, 4 in 10 shop workers only received half a day's training or less per year of service. *(Figure 2)*

Figure 2 ***Training per year of service***

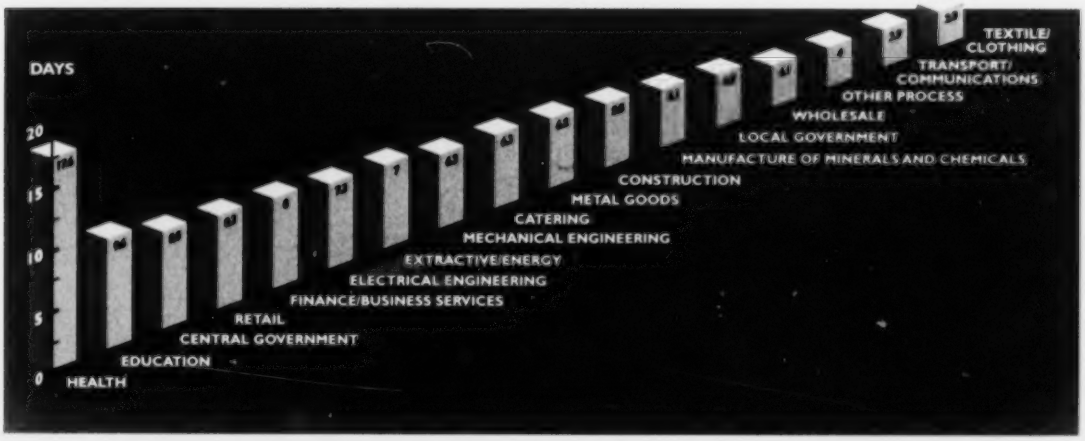


1.5

Our data on the amount of training received by shop workers differs considerably from that presented in the Department of Employment's report, *Training in Britain* (1989) which dealt with the length of training working people in the UK received in the year 1986-1987.

The *Training in Britain* research showed that, in this one year, retail employees received, on average, 8.3 days' training. If only those who received training are included, the average length of training shop workers received in the year 1986-87 increased from 8.3 days to 12.2 days. *(Figure 3)*

Figure 3 ***Days' training per employee in different industries in 1986-87***



(Data from Employers' Activities, ***Training in Britain*** *1989:20)*

1.6

The average level of shop worker training in the retail sector shown in our survey is 5.75 *total days' training which works out at just under 1 day's training for each year of service.* This is considerably less than the 8.3 days per employee shown in the ***Training in Britain*** report for the single year 1986-87. Also, our estimate includes induction training which is deliberately excluded from the ***Training in Britain*** estimates. Some of the differences in the two reports will be due to differences in the research methodologies and some of the information contained in the ***Training in Britain*** report is in some ways not compatible with the data we have collected.
For example, our survey covered the entire period of work with the current employer whereas the ***Training in Britain*** report dealt with 1 year only.
Most importantly, our survey was based on information provided by shop workers (the people who received the training) whereas the ***Training in Britain*** report was based on interviews with senior managers and others concerned with the delivery of the training. It may be that the managers and others interviewed for the ***Training in Britain*** report had very different ideas from shop floor staff about what constitutes training.
Also, some of the managers interviewed during the ***Training in Britain*** research may have overstated the amount of training given to their employees because there appear to be considerable differences between official company training policies and procedures and everyday store level training practices.

Training in different stores

1.7

The size and the type of the retail outlet affected the amount of training the shop workers in our sample received.

Comparing large and small supermarkets

Companies with smaller outlets appear to lack the resources and professional trainers needed to deliver the same levels of training as companies operating large supermarkets. When the amount of vocational education and training received by shop workers in small and large supermarkets is compared it emerges that staff working in smaller supermarkets received less training. For example, 36% of staff employed in small supermarkets received 1 day or less total training but only 15% of the staff employed by large supermarkets received this low level of VET. This finding confirms the *Training in Britain* report that the size of the establishment effects the amount of training employers provide their staff.

1.8

Comparing department stores with large supermarkets

Staff working in department stores tend to have longer periods of service compared with staff working in large supermarkets and also have a different relationship with the goods on sale and the customers.
Nevertheless, our survey suggests that department store staff did *not* receive more training than their counterparts working in large supermarkets.
For example, 28% of the staff employed in department stores received 1 day or less total training but only 15% of the staff employed in large supermarkets received this low level of VET. At the other end of the scale, approximately 41% of shop workers employed in large supermarkets received more than 5 days' total training as compared with only 23% department store staff.

1.9

Comparing large supermarkets

Our survey revealed that the amount of training given to shop workers varied considerably between companies operating in the same part of retailing. Comparing the length of training provided in 4 large supermarket companies showed significant variations. *Figure 4* shows that shop workers employed in different companies received significantly different amounts of training. For example, in Company A 6% of staff received training of half a day or less and 13% received between 4-5 days' total training but in Company B 3% received up to half a day and 9% received between 4-5 days' total training.

Figure 4 **Total length of training: comparing 4 large supermarket companies**

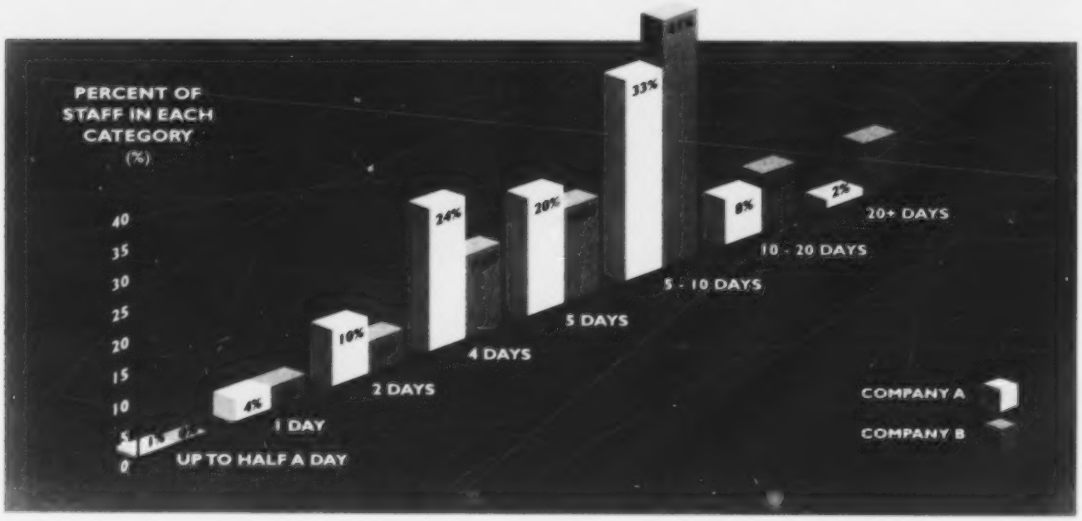
(The figures show the percent of staff in each category)

	Amount of VET							
Four companies	**Up to half a day**	**0.5 - 1 day**	**1 - 2 days**	**2 - 4 days**	**4 - 5 days**	**5 - 10 days**	**10 - 20 days**	**20+ days**
Company A	6	7	12	19	13	29	10	4
Company B	3	3	14	18	9	30	14	9
Company C	10	9	12	21	10	22	12	4
Company D	12	16	18	16	6	20	6	6

1.10

To ensure the level of variation in these 4 companies was not the result of a different occupational mix we also examined the length of training given to checkout operators (one of the largest occupational groups) working for 2 large supermarket companies. The variation in the amount of training they received was quite pronounced. *Figure 5* shows, for example, that 59% of Company A compared with 40% in Company B received 1 week or less total training.

Figure 5 **Checkout operators training: comparing 2 large supermarket companies**



BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Training in one company

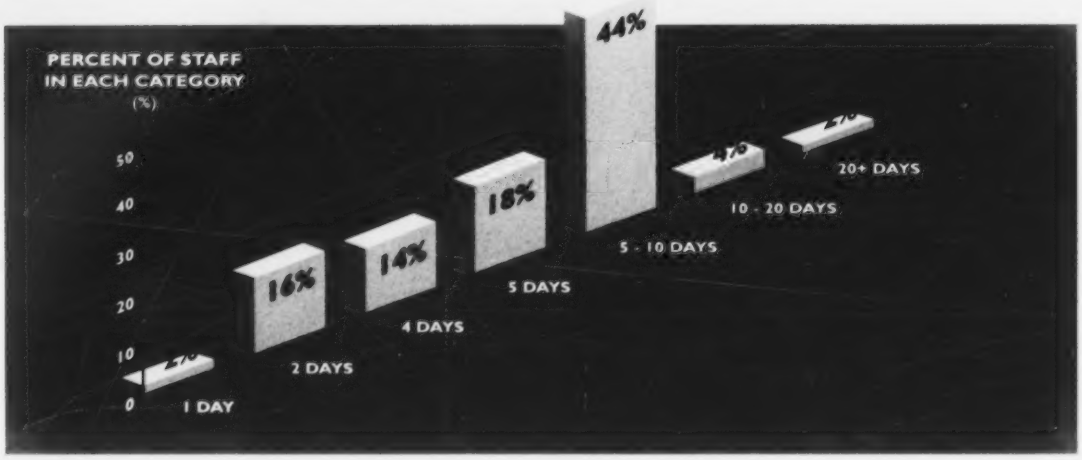
1.11

Most large retail companies have training policies and procedures which are designed and specified by Head Office personnel and training professionals. One would expect, therefore, that shop workers employed by the same company would receive broadly similar amounts of training.

Comparing training levels within one large company

Our survey indicates that shop workers in the *same company* often received widely varying amounts of training. It is evident that a company's centrally determined training policies are not always applied at their store level. *Figure 6* shows the amount of training received by checkout operators in one large company is not at all consistent. For example, taking checkout operators with 1–3 years' service (so we are dealing with current practices), 18% of the sample received 2 days' or less training, 32% received between 4 - 5 days and 44% were given 1 - 2 weeks' total training. The same levels of variation occur for other occupational groups and in other companies.

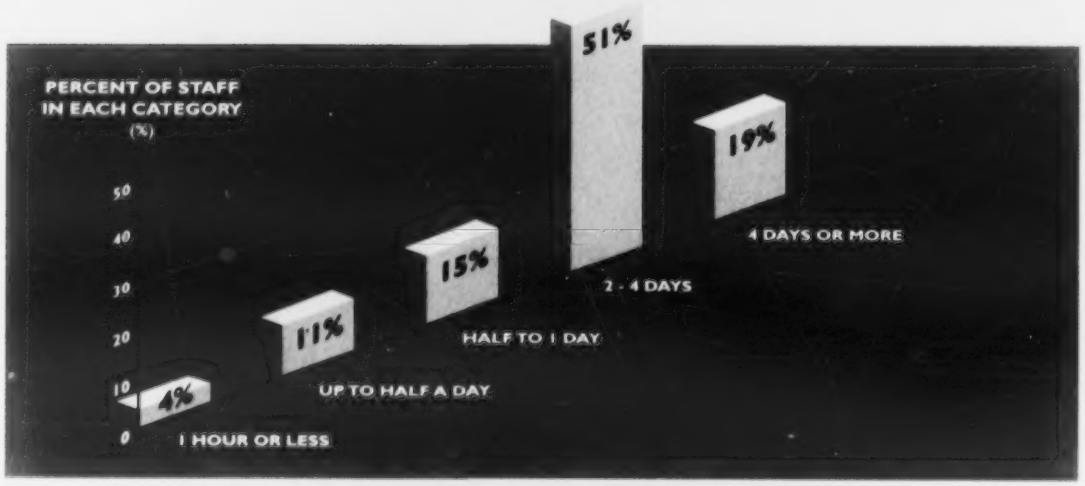
Figure 6 ***Checkout operators, all types of training: a large supermarket company***



1.12

Figure 7 examines the amount of till training (a specific type of training provided for an occupational group) given to the checkout operators in one large supermarket company. Only checkout operators with 1 - 3 years' service are included in this Figure so we are dealing with current training practices. The Figure shows that although the majority of checkout operators received between 2 - 4 days' training a large proportion received quite different levels of till training.

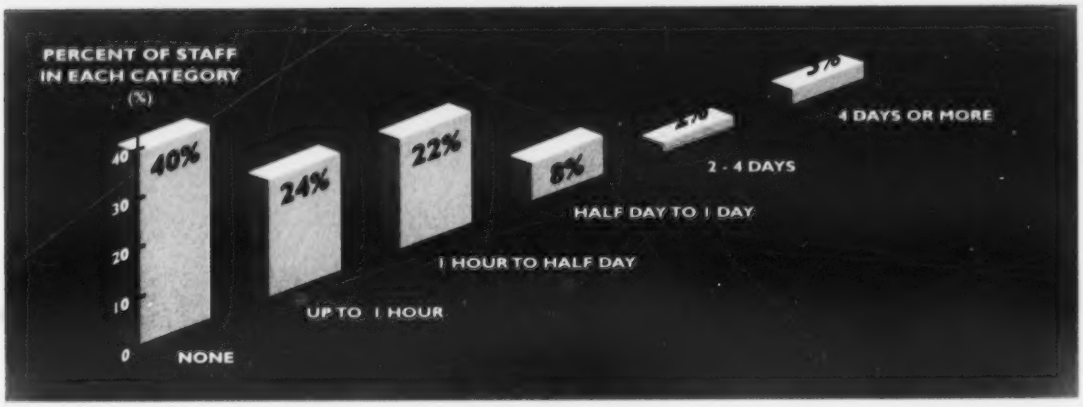
Figure 7 **Checkout operators till training: a large supermarket company**



1.13

When we compared customer care training in the same company high levels of variation were also found. In this case, for example, almost 40% of staff have, to-date, received no customer care training, 24% said it took about 1 hour and a further 22% reported customer care training of up to half a day's duration. *(Figure 8).*

Figure 8 ***Customer care training: a large supermarket company***



Factors influencing the level of training

1.14

The questionnaire and interview data suggested that there are 4 key structural factors influencing the variation in the levels of training provided within a company. These are:

- when staff initially start working for their company;
- the workload in the store;
- the store manager's attitude to training;
- the availability of the staff trainer.

"Having been trained for a new store everyone has the advantage of time. When taken on in an established store it is usually because someone has left... the new staff are needed as soon as possible so training tends to be rushed."

Interview extract

Staff recruited when a store is being newly opened generally received the company's full training programme. However, if they are recruited at any other time the amount of training they received could fall considerably. Also, staff joining their companies at peak workload times of the year, such as Christmas, may miss out on training.

The day-to-day workload on existing staff is also important. In the questionnaire half the sample agreed with the statement that 'the manager wants to train but there is never enough staff to release for training.'

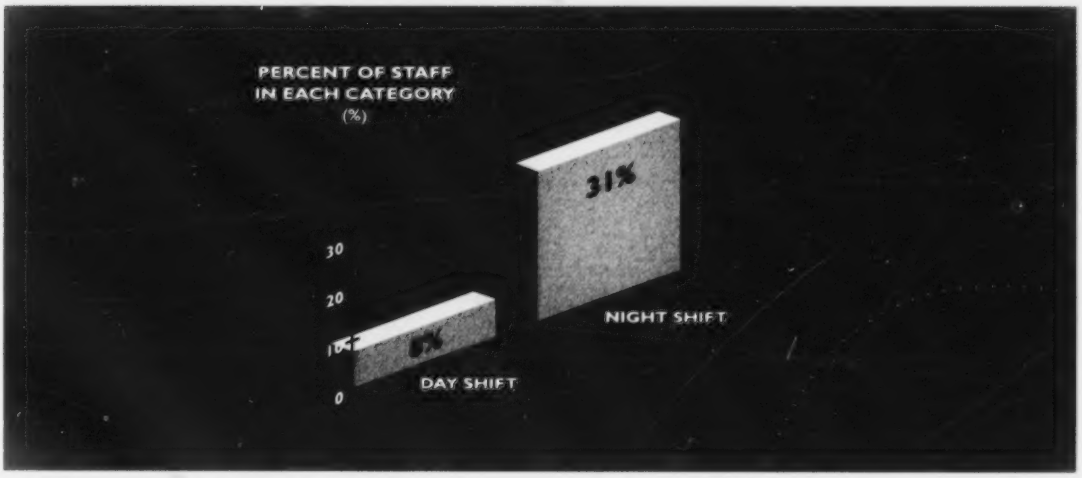
"In-store training tended to be rushed – pressure of completing jobs and having interruptions from customers."

Interview extract

The interview data shows that the store manager's commitment to training and the resources available to her or him can determine how much training is carried out in a store. The *IMS* study also shows that the attitude of the store manager towards vocational education and training, and not the company's declared policy, often determines how much vocational education and training is provided to staff.

The availability of the staff trainer is another key factor effecting the amount of training staff receive. Night staff tended to receive less amounts of training. Almost one third of all night shift workers only received half a day's total training but much smaller proportions of day shift staff fell into this category. *(Figure 9)*

Figure 9 ***Training and the effects of different shifts: shop workers receiving only half a day or less training***



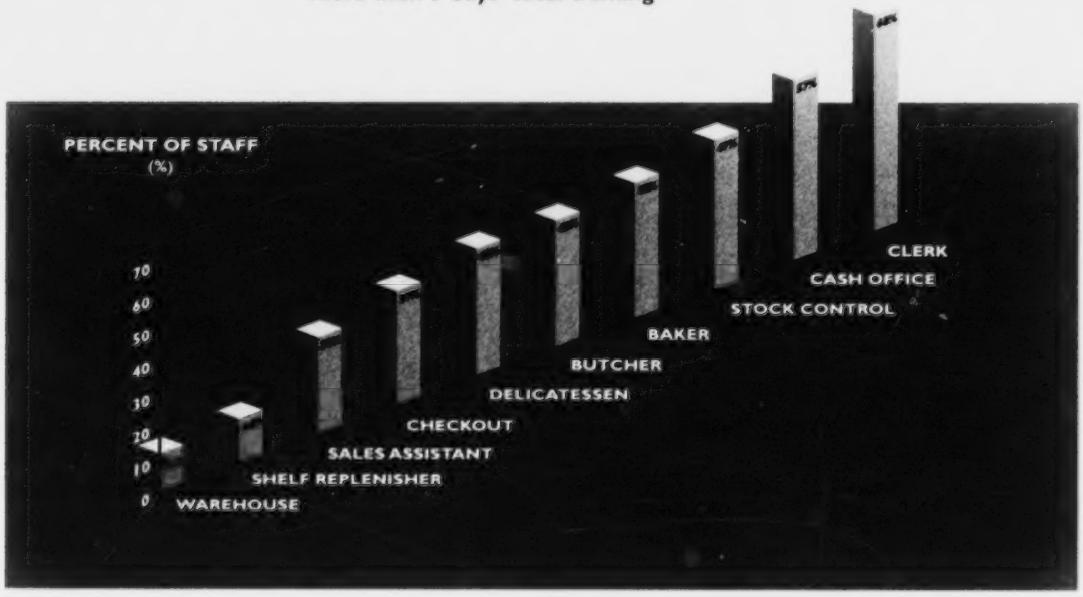
Part of this difference may be due to the fact that the majority, 6 in 10 of night workers are engaged in shelf replenishing and staff in this job received less training than most other groups of workers. Employers feel this amount of VET is sufficient for the job but, of course, it leaves little or no room for VET which opens up prospects for alternative jobs, promotion or personal development.

Training in different occupations

1.15

Our survey indicated that there are significant differences in the amount of training received by each occupational group. For example, almost 7 in 10 clerical workers and 6 in 10 cash office staff received more than 5 days' total training but at the other end of the scale very few warehouse workers or shelf replenishing staff received training of this duration. *(Figure 10)*

Figure 10 ***Percent of staff in 10 retail occupations receiving more than 5 days' total training***



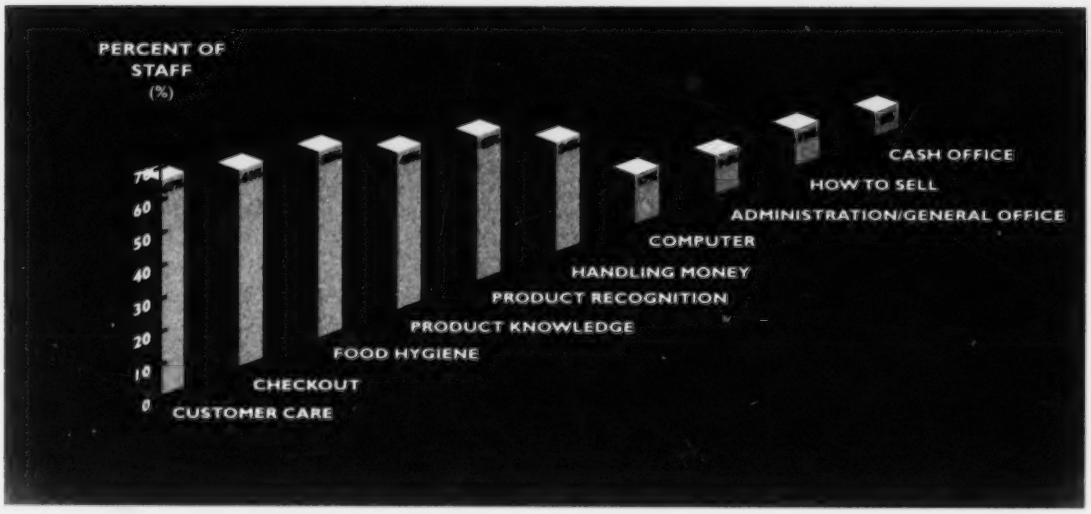
Different training subjects

1.16

The 11 most common types of training currently used in the retail sector were identified in Section 1.2

Not all staff received training in all these subjects. For example, only 8% of the staff in the whole sample said they had received any cash office training and only 17% of the sample were provided with computer training. At the other end of the scale 61% of the sample have received some checkout training and 67% customer care training. *(Figure 11)*

Figure 11 **Percent of staff receiving each training subject**



Induction

1.17

"I would like to have had some induction training... fire evacuation and at least shown where the toilets and canteen facilities were. I wouldn't like to work for the company when I left college."

Interview extract

Just over 8 in 10 shop workers received some type of induction or start up training. It is the most common type of training reported by the shop workers in our sample and only 17% said they had not received any such training. However, the contents of induction training can vary a great deal. It can include a snapshot of the company, staff disciplinary and health and safety policies and such items as staff uniform, fire drill procedures and smoking rules. Induction training is often the first substantial point of contact between the new employee and the company and it is often the only company wide view the newly appointed staff member will receive. For some staff it can be the only formal training they will ever receive. Nevertheless, although it is an extremely important area of training our survey indicated that approximately 70% of induction training took 1 day or less to complete.

Customer care

1.18

Customer care training was the second most frequently reported training subject. Just over two thirds of shop workers have received some customer care training. Of those who received this training about 37% were given an hour's training and a further 36% received half a day's training.

Product knowledge and recognition

1.19

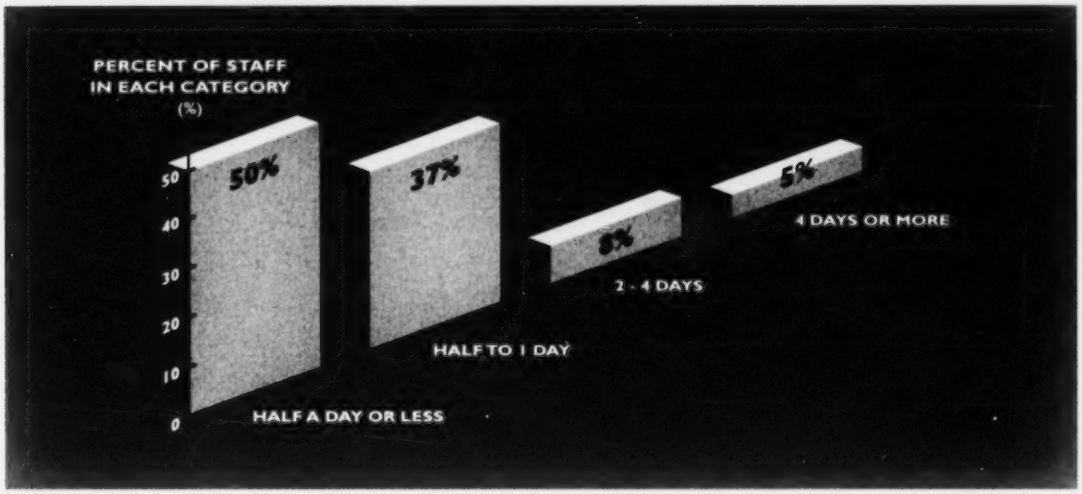
About half the sample received some product knowledge and product recognition training. Most of the staff concerned reported either 1 hour or half day sessions.

Food hygiene

1.20

The number of staff receiving food hygiene training has rapidly increased in the last 3 years following the introduction of legislation to protect the public by making this training 'compulsory' for all staff handling food. Some 58% of the staff in our sample had received some food hygiene training. However, food hygiene training is relatively short. In half the cases the training took half a day or less. *Figure 12* gives a breakdown of the amount of food hygiene training shop workers received. In addition, our research also showed that 1 in 10 of shop workers directly handling food may not yet have received any food hygiene training.

Figure 12 ***Length of food hygiene training courses***



Administration/ general office

1.21

Approximately half of the shop staff working directly in clerical, computing and other related jobs have received no administration/general office training. Of those being provided with some administration/general office training just over one third said this took 4 days or more. About half the managers in our sample did not report any administration/general office training.

Checkout

1.22

"Using computer tills – gave me more confidence... I seemed to pick up the training really quickly and as this is my first job since leaving school it made me feel good."

Interview extract

Almost a quarter of the sample gave either checkout operator or checkout supervisor as their main job but considerably more, approximately 60% of our sample stated they had received some till training – generally of short duration. In the case of dedicated checkout operators (those shop workers who said this was their main job) 13% received 1 hour's till training, 36% received between half and 1 day's till training, 37% received between 2 and 4 days and 14% said they received over 4 days' till training.

Computer technology

1.23

"On-going training package for the computer, done on the computer but no work books to go with it and no-one explained what it was we had to do, it was a case of fumble through."

Interview extract

The *Institute of Manpower Studies No. 238* (1993:28) report states that everyone in retailing *"will need a general awareness of what technology can do, and be able to access information from it."* In our sample, however, computer training had only been given to 17% of the staff. Moreover, a lot of this training was fairly short with 25% of the training taking 1 hour and a further 28% lasting between half and 1 day.

The *IMS* report also stated that store and warehouse managers must have a strong appreciation of information technology, be able to analyse data and also train others. In our survey, three quarters of the managers and supervisors (approximately 250 of our sample) did not report any computer training.

Additional training courses

1.24

"Hazardous substances, rushed through in 10 minutes by a department manager and then given a question and answer paper to answer in another 10 minutes. NOT MUCH USE."

Interview extract

About a third of the sample received training in addition to the 11 most common vocational education and training subjects currently used in the retail sector. However, much of this training was concentrated on managers and supervisors. Although managers and supervisors only make up 13% of the sample, they received 39% of this additional vocational education and training. This additional training varied from a few minutes being shown how to operate a fire extinguisher to lengthy and residential outward bound courses designed to develop managerial team spirit. There were 14 people with courses, mainly day release, which lasted between 1 and 3 years.
However, for most people these additional training sessions did not last very long. Almost a quarter of the courses took under half a day to complete and although 70 people said they had undertaken an extra 4 or more courses, about 60% of the sample who received this additional training stated they had attended only 1 additional course.

1.25

Over 200 different course titles were recorded, many of them were company specific. There were approximately 150 supervisors in this sample – but only 25 staff said they had received supervisory training.
The most frequently reported courses (over and above the 11 most common courses used in this questionnaire) together with the number of respondents reporting this type of course (in brackets) are as follows:

- Health and safety (116),
- First aid (65),
- Fire fighting (49),
- Basic food hygiene (31),
- Delicatessen (30),
- Baking (28),
- Supervisor training (25),
- Provisions course (25),
- Chill chain (25),
- Management training (21).

It should be emphasised that adding this training time to the time spent on the 11 most common training activities would not substantially increase the average length of training provided to the shop workers in our sample.

Conclusion

1.26

The data provided in this chapter indicates that, on average, shop workers received a total of 5.75 days' training from their current employer, irrespective of the length of their service. Since the average length of service of our sample is approximately 6 years, this works out at just under 1 day's training for each year of service. The level and type of training provided is influenced by a range of factors including, the size and type of store, the store manager's attitude to training and the training staff and resources available at store level. There are wide variations in the training provided both between companies and within the same company (sometimes even within the same store). Finally our survey suggests that the amount of VET shop workers received is below the levels suggested by earlier Department of Employment commissioned research and less than the amount many company Head Office Training Departments believe is taking place in their stores.

The amount of shop workers' training appears to be insufficient to make major inroads into the National Education and Training Targets or to be commensurate with Government, CBI and trade union aims of overcoming the skills gap between the UK and its economic competitors. The sector's S/NVQ, the Retail Certificate, is a competence based qualification and not a time based qualification and, therefore, there are no industry-wide guidelines of the *amount* of VET needed to gain the Retail Certificate at levels 1 and 2. The qualification is said to be the equivalent of 4 GCSEs at levels A - C but even allowing for prior learning experience and the competence based nature of S/NVQs, the shop worker's current average level of training of 5.75 days in total does not appear to be in line with these equivalents.

Chapter 2

Shop workers' views on the value of their training

Introduction

2.1

This chapter examines shop workers' views about the value of their vocational training. The primary aim is to identify how useful they found the training for the performance of their jobs and with regard to their personal and career development. We also compare the evaluation of those shop workers who participated in a training programme leading to an S/NVQ with those whose training did not lead to such a qualification.

2.2

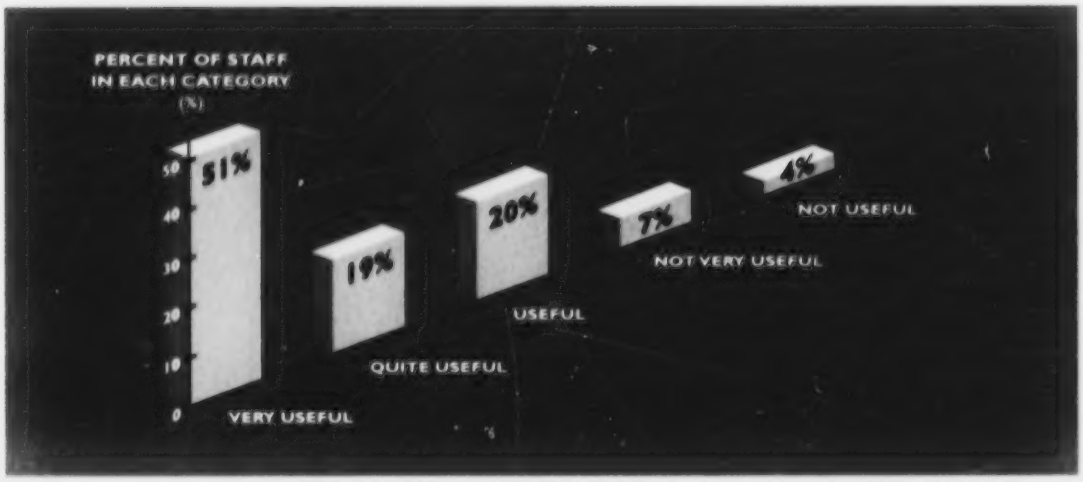
The *Training in Britain* report noted that all training tends to be valued highly because training itself is regarded as a 'good thing'. Our research tended to confirm this conclusion and when shop workers were asked general questions about how valuable and useful they found their training, the responses were very positive. A rather different picture emerged, however, when we probed more deeply and asked detailed questions both in the interviews and on the questionnaire.

General attitudes towards training

2.3

On the questionnaire the overwhelming majority of shop workers put their vocational education and training in the *'useful'* to *'very useful'* range with only a few of them recording that their training was *'not very useful'* or *'not useful'*. On examining shop workers' assessment of the 11 training subjects common throughout much of the retail sector we found that 51% said their training was *'very useful'*. *(Figure 13)*

Figure 13 **The value of training**



This is a positive set of training outcomes. Nevertheless, there were also a number of important differences in the shop workers' evaluation of different types of training. For example:

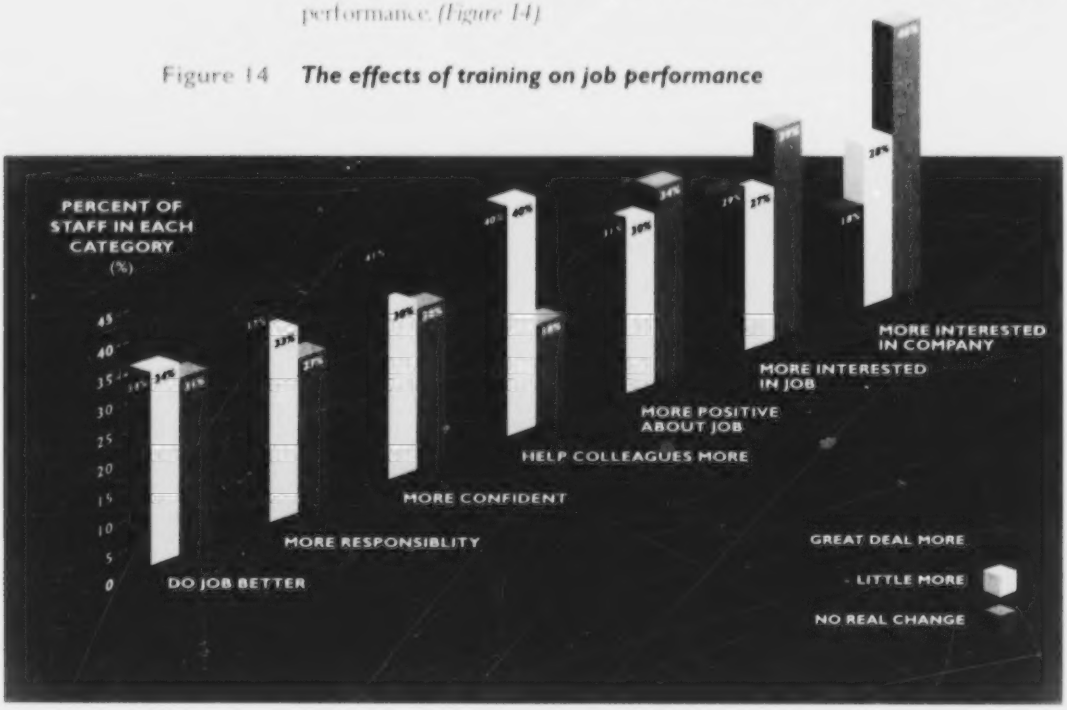
- the most highly regarded training course was checkout or till training where almost 7 in 10 of the sample said it was *'very useful'*;
- about 80% of shop workers received induction training but less than half said that this training was *'very useful'*;
- almost 70% of shop workers reported some type of customer care training but only 4 in 10 described it as *'very useful'*;
- the highest level of negative evaluations were for cash office and administration/general office training. Just under 21% of those receiving cash office and 14% of those receiving administration/general office training stated that the training was either *'not very useful'* or *'not useful'*.

Training and job performance

2.4

We examined shop workers' views on the value of their training in some detail by asking 7 questions concerning the effects of the training on their attitudes towards their jobs and if they thought it had improved their job performance. *(Figure 14)*

Figure 14 ***The effects of training on job performance***

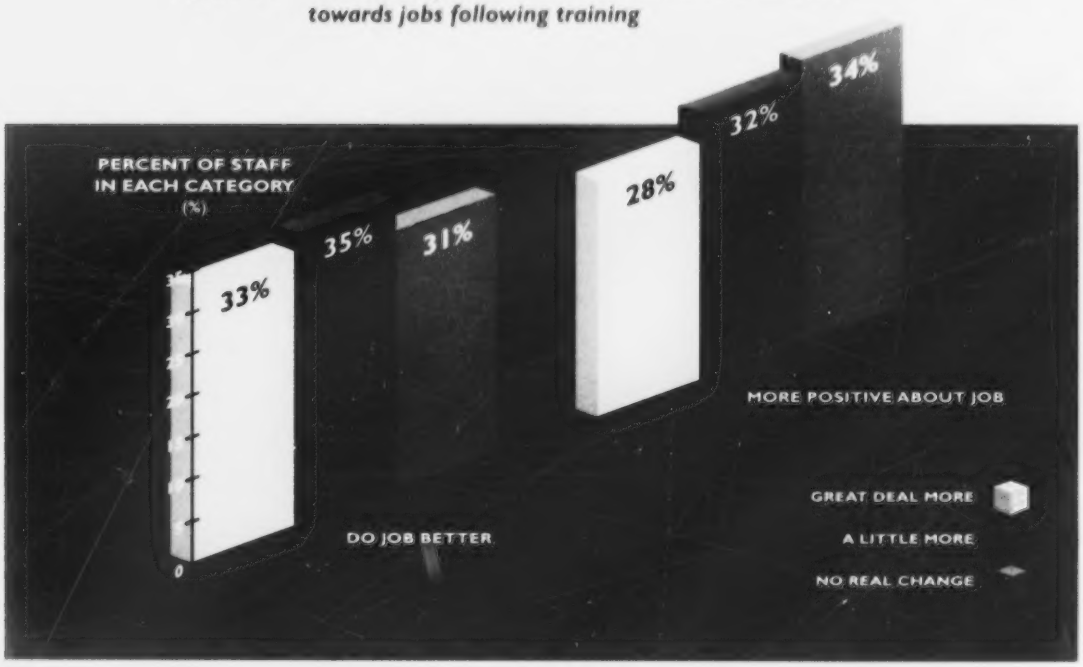


It is significant that about 6 in 10 of the shop workers in our sample concluded that the training they received led to no great improvement in any of the areas identified. Only about 1 in 3 believed their training had helped them to do their job a great deal better whilst 2 in 3 saw little or no change in their interest in their job. Worse still, less than 1 in 5 of the workers surveyed thought that their training had made them a lot more interested in their company. Interestingly, the best results concerned the impact of training on their confidence in being able to help out colleagues more.

2.5

It can be argued that checkout operators and sales assistants are in the *'front line'* with regards to customer service and, therefore, need to be skilled, well informed and positive in their attitudes. With this in mind we looked at how checkout operators and sales assistants felt that training affected their ability to do their job and their feelings about their jobs. *(Figure 15)*

Figure 15 ***Checkout operators and sales assistants: attitudes towards jobs following training***



Approximately 3 in 10 of these 'front line' workers said they could do their job a great deal better following training, a further third said the training made little difference and the rest said there was no real change.
Only 28% of the shop workers in these jobs reported they felt a lot more positive about their work following training compared with 66% who said the training made little or no difference.

Training and personal development

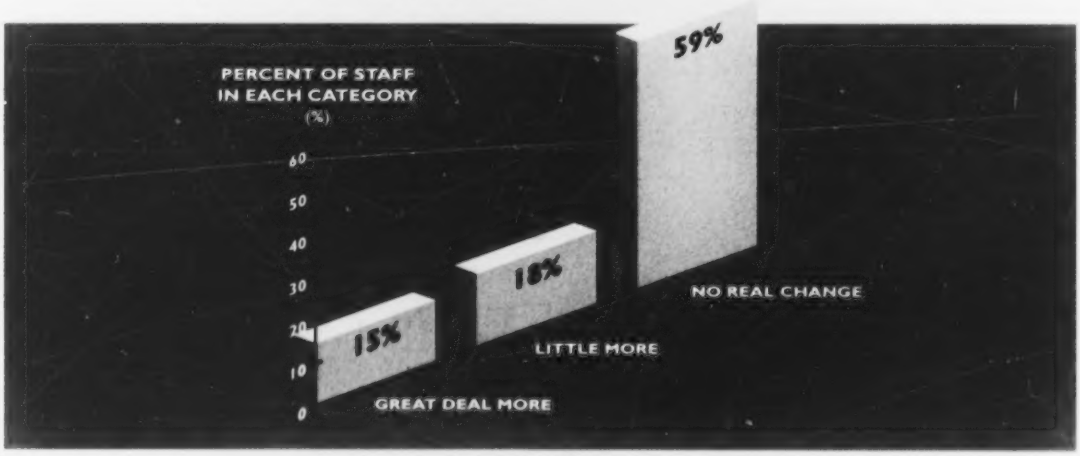
2.6

Employers investing in VET obviously look for a return with regard to employees' attitudes towards their jobs and improved job performance. Good quality VET, however, has also to offer more to employees in terms of the development of transferable skills and of new employment (and learning) progression routes. This link between training and staff development is vital if employee commitment to and involvement in training is to be secured and if training is to contribute towards the creation of a multi-skilled and adaptable work force. Our survey of shop workers' views on the value of their training, therefore, included a number of questions concerning the effects of this training on personal and career development. The responses indicated that a sizeable proportion of our sample see few links between their training and their personal development.

2.7

Figure 16 indicates that very few staff believe that their training has substantially enhanced their prospects for promotion with their current employer. Thus, only 15% of the shop workers in our sample reported that their training had greatly increased their promotion prospects compared with almost 60% who stated that their training had made *'no real change'*.

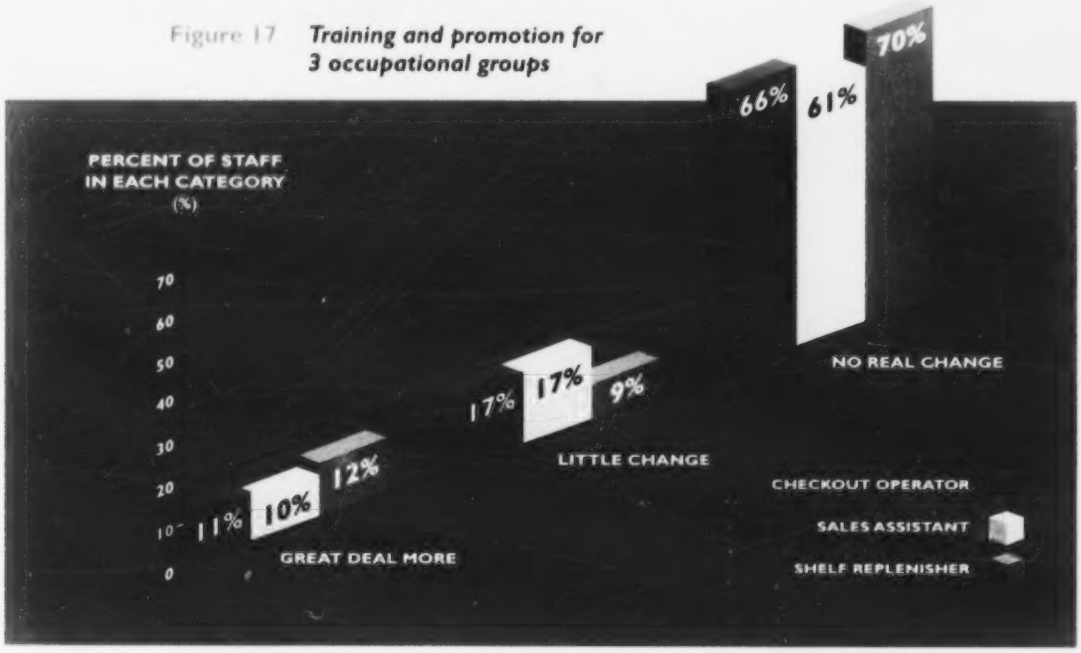
Figure 16 ***Training and promotion***



2.8

Three of the largest groups in retailing are: checkout operators, sales assistants and shelf replenishers. We examined the views about training and promotion for each group. *Figure 17* shows that only 10-12% of shop workers in any of these 3 occupations believed that their training had greatly increased their promotion prospects compared with 61-70% who stated there had been *'no real change'*.

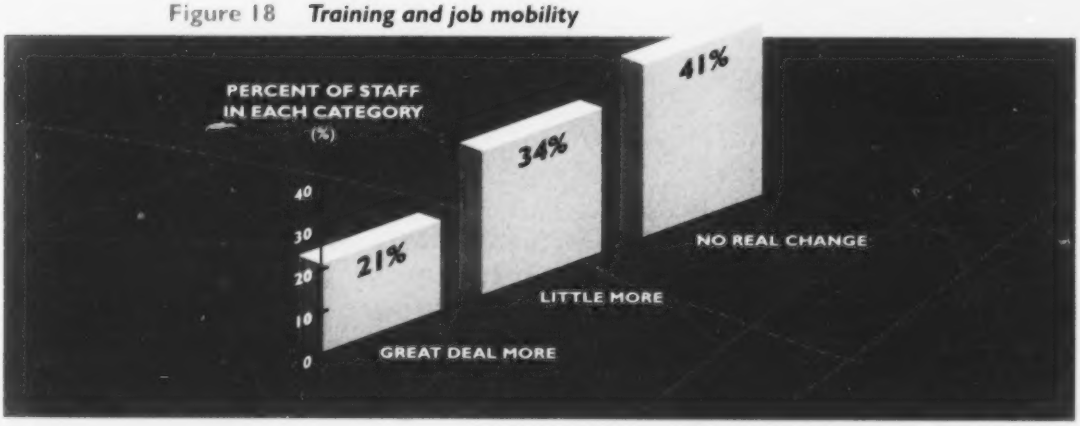
Figure 17 ***Training and promotion for 3 occupational groups***



2.9

Good quality training should provide shop workers with transferable skills (skills recognised and valued by other employers). However, *Figure 18* shows that only about 1 in 5 of the shop workers in our survey think that their training has significantly increased their ability to *'get a better job with another company'*.

Figure 18 ***Training and job mobility***



BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Training and S/NVQs

2.10

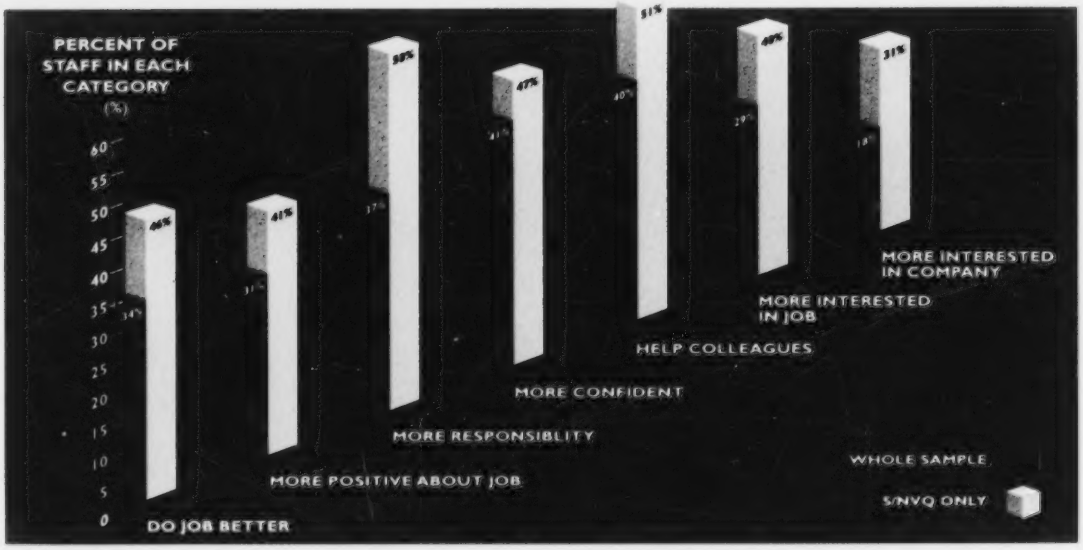
The retail sector's S/NVQ (The Retail Certificate) was launched in 1988 but recent data shows that it has not yet become widely adopted throughout the sector, even amongst major employers ***(NVQ Monitor Spring/Summer 1994)***. This was reflected in our survey where only just under 4% of our sample (75 shop workers) reported that they had received or were engaged in training linked to a S/NVQ. Nevertheless, we were concerned to see whether or not the possibility of getting an S/NVQ had any impact on employees' perceptions of the value of their training. In spite of the smallness of this sample the data collected in our survey showed quite clearly that shop workers with S/NVQ experience were far more likely than their non-S/NVQ colleagues to say that their training experience was positive. In every category there was a greater proportion of staff with experience of a S/NVQ who said their training had a considerable and beneficial effect on them.

2.11

When we examined shop workers' views on the value of their training and how it had effected their attitudes towards their jobs and if it had improved their job performance we found that 34% of the whole sample said they were able to do their job a great deal better following training. However, a greater proportion, 46%, of the shop workers who reported some S/NVQ experience stated that the training had enabled to do their job a great deal better following training. Similarly, only 37% in the whole sample but 58% of the S/NVQ group indicated that they could take on a great deal more responsibility following their training.

In *Figure 19* we show how many shop workers with S/NVQ experience stated that their training had improved their job performance a great deal and compare it with the response from the rest of the sample. In each of the 7 statements used in our questionnaire to gauge the relationship between training and job performance shop workers with S/NVQ experience tended to be more positive about their training than the sample as whole.

Figure 19 ***Percent saying training had a major impact on job performance: whole sample and S/NVQs compared***



2.12

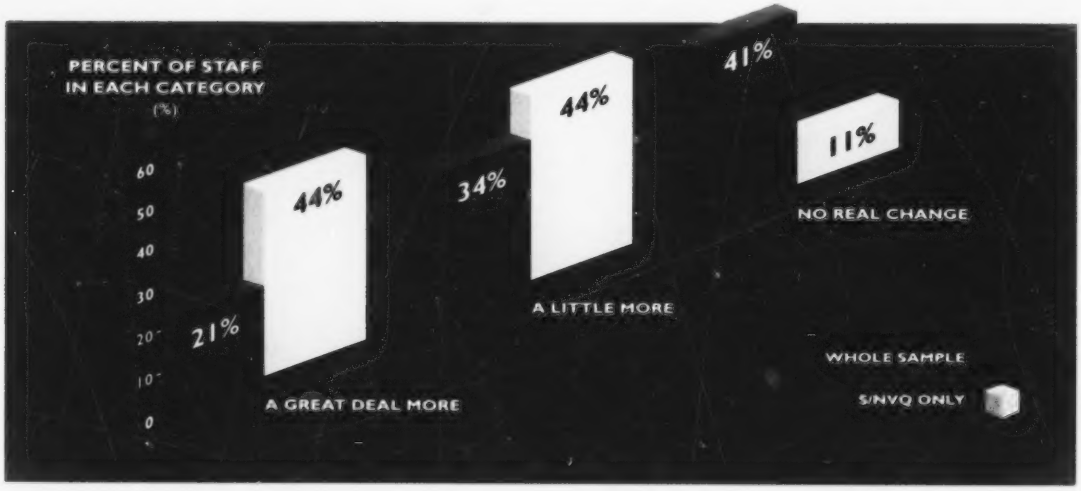
A similar picture emerged with regard to job promotion and job mobility. In our overall survey only 15% of shop workers said their training had greatly enhanced their promotion prospects whilst 59% stated it had made *'no real change'*. In the case of the S/NVQ sample, however, the proportion indicating that they felt their training had significantly improved their promotion possibilities doubled (34%) and less than 1 in 3 saw *'no real change'*. *(Figure 20)*

Figure 20 ***Training and promotion: whole sample and S/NVQs compared***

2.13

S/NVQ accreditation made a significant difference to shop workers' views on the value of their training with regard to job mobility. In our overall survey 75% of shop workers stated that their training had made little or no real change to their ability to get a better job with another company. Those with S/NVQ experience, however, were much more positive: almost 1 in 2 of these workers (compared with 1 in 5 of the whole sample) believed that their training had greatly enhanced their job mobility potential. Relatively few shop workers with S/NVQ experience said their VET had made *'no real change'* to their job mobility prospects. It may be that the nationally recognised S/NVQ certificate as well as the S/NVQ- related training programme increased the shop workers' positive assessment of the training. *(Figure 21)*

Figure 21 ***Training and job mobility: whole sample and S/NVQs compared***



Conclusion

2.14

In our survey the vast majority of shop workers expressed positive attitudes about the general value of training. But, when asked to assess the value and usefulness of the training they have received with reference to specific criteria they were far less positive. Only 2 in 5 found that their training gave them a lot more confidence or allowed them to help out their colleagues a lot more, while only 1 in 3 found themselves able to do their job much better or felt much more positive or interested in their job. Just under 1 in 5 said that their training made them a great deal more interested in their company. Training was not seen to lead to opportunities for promotion with 3 in 5 of our sample believing that promotion prospects would either not improve or only improve a little. Neither was training seen as providing the transferable skills that would lead to job mobility, with only 1 in 5 of the sample believing the training had done a lot to equip them to get a better job with another company.

Employers recognise the important role played by their staff who meet the public on a day by day basis. Yet only 1 in 4 sales assistants and a slightly more encouraging 2 in 5 of checkout operators felt that training equipped them to do their job much better.

The single most encouraging development came from our study of the attitudes of the admittedly small number of our survey who had experience of S/NVQ accreditation. Here, employees were much more positive about the benefit of their training in terms of their job performance, their attitude towards their job and in contributing towards promotion and job mobility. Positive attitudes in some categories doubled.

These findings have major implications for retail employees. There is little doubt that large companies in particular put a lot of time and effort into training programmes and have a commitment towards training. Yet the results of our research show that according to the shop workers surveyed what is currently provided fails to deliver satisfactory outcomes from the viewpoint of both employees and employers. This must inevitably affect staff performance and morale. Greater attention is urgently needed to a consideration of what employees want and why current programmes are failing to interest and involve them. Also, further research is needed to examine the impact of S/NVQs on employee perceptions of VET.

Chapter 3

The delivery of training

Introduction

3.1

In this chapter we examine some of the major factors concerning the delivery of VET which influence shop workers' evaluation of the training which they receive. These factors include such items as, the extent of company support for training, the teaching methods and aids, the quality of the trainer, the timing of training and certification.

Management attitudes towards training

3.2

Our survey indicated that the training culture created by companies and by store managers has a significant effect on shop workers' evaluation of their training. For example, when shop workers indicated that their company strongly encouraged VET the percentage reporting their induction training as *'very useful'* rose to 64% compared with the sample average of 43%. Conversely, if the store manager was perceived as being particularly uninterested in VET the percentage describing their induction training as *'very useful'* fell to 31%. *Figures 22* and *23* reaffirm the importance of a strong company lead in training.

Figure 22 examines the effect of managerial attitudes towards training. When shop workers regarded their manager as interested in VET the proportion who reported their training experiences enabled them to perform their job a great deal better rose substantially.

Figure 22 **Feeling able to do job better following training: the effect of managerial attitudes**

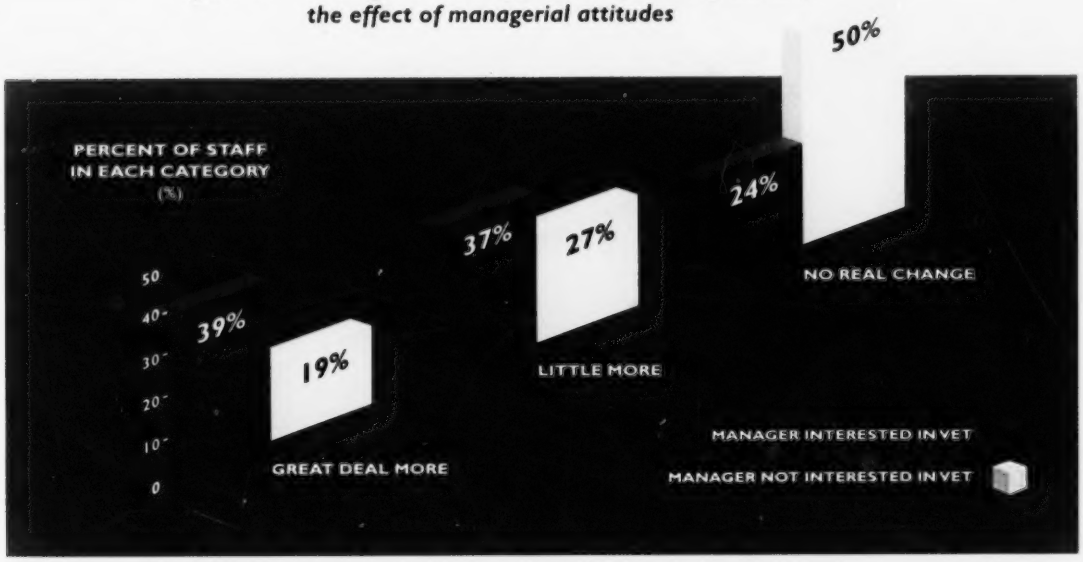
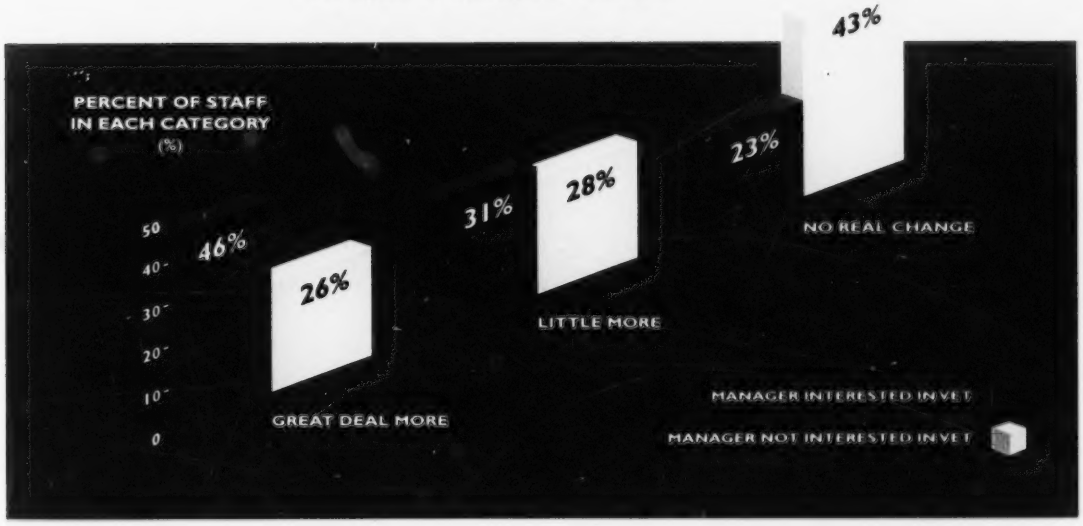


Figure 23 demonstrates that when shop workers perceived their managers as interested in VET a considerably greater percentage said their training made them feel a *'great deal more'* confident doing their job.

Figure 23 **Being more confident in the job following training: the effect of managerial attitudes**



3.3

In general terms companies and store managers were seen to promote VET and only 20% of our sample reported a negative attitude on the part of managers. However, 55% reported that although their company was *'keen'* on training, *'nothing much happens in my store.'* Moreover, 57% of shop workers in our survey indicated that although they believed that their manager wanted to train them there was never enough staff to spare for training. It is evident that if companies are going to maximise the benefits of training then they need to be seen to be providing positive support for training and ensuring that staffing levels and training resources are sufficient to allow effective implementation of company training policy. A rhetorical commitment to training is quickly seen through by shop workers.

Front-loaded training

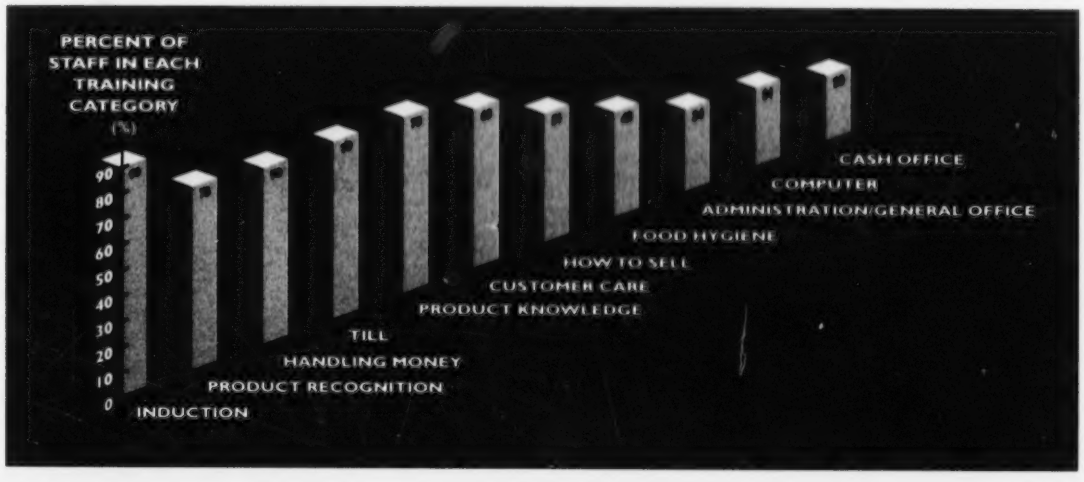
3.4

"I feel on-going training for the people on the shop floor is non-existent yet it is important. How else can we keep up-to-date...how can we ever know too much."

Interview extract

Our survey indicated that there is little evidence in the retail sector of a commitment to providing shop workers with continuing training. There is some up-date training, for example, when new checkouts are introduced and some product knowledge training was said to be on-going. However, it is evident that most training is front-loaded, taking place at the beginning of employment. *Figure 24* shows the 11 most common training courses used in retailing and the percentage of shop workers who received this training in the same year they started work with their employer. In most cases very few shop workers (2-3%) reported that they had received subsequent training in these areas.

Figure 24 ***The timing of training: percent of staff receiving training in the same year they started work with employer***



3.5

"They try to tell you a lot of things all at once, giving you a lot of information to store in a very short time."

Interview extract

"As if the only way to make people understand was to keep on hammering away at the same thing over and over again."

Interview extract

According to our interview and questionnaire data, training provided in one block at the beginning of the employment, especially when there is little or no on-going training can be ineffective. Many people feel they are given too much data in too short a period of time for it to be assimilated. Moreover, when people are new to a company it is not always easy to know what is really important data and consequently everything has to be retained and this adds to feelings of information overload. Additionally, being new to a company and lacking experience, means the individual is frequently unable to ask relevant questions. As there is often no other training opportunity, gaps in knowledge created at this stage can remain unfilled and errors uncorrected. From some of the interview responses it would appear that companies try to overcome some of these problems by constantly repeating the same points. The interview data suggests this may cause some resentment and be counterproductive.

The trainer

3.6

"...training did make me feel more confident and comfortable because the trainer was very good and I gained a lot from her."

Interview extract

"The training given was excellent and very useful (it) enabled me to become efficient, understand the job rather than 'just pick it up'... because the training was excellent it enabled me to ease into the job very quickly."

Interview extract

"My training for the petrol station and kiosk was carried out by in store trainer. She was very good. But I found it too short, one hour, then you learn as you go along. I'm happy in my job now but found the first two months very hard work and very stressful."

Interview extract

The professionalism and competence of the trainers is a significant factor influencing shop workers' views on their training. Our survey indicates that, on the whole, staff trainers are of a high standard. About 25% of our sample indicated that their trainers appeared bored, strict and formal and only really interested in getting through the session. The rest of the sample, 75%, said their trainers were knowledgeable, conveyed points well and appeared to be interested in their views. This positive evaluation of trainers varied when examined in conjunction with different occupational groups. For example, 69% of sales assistants said that their trainers were *'very knowledgeable'* but an even larger number of checkout operators (84%) described them in this way. The importance of good staff trainers can be illustrated by examining the effect trainers have on shop workers' assessment of their training. When shop workers described their trainer as *'very knowledgeable'* the proportion who said their induction training was *'very valuable'* rose to 68% compared with the sample average of 43%. When the trainer was not viewed positively only 15% said they could do their jobs a *'great deal'* better.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

3.7

"We are usually shown pieces of foolscap paper to read whilst the manager stands next to you and when you've read it you sign it and he tells the company that you have had the training."

Interview extract

"When moving departments staff retraining should be done at another store so if mistakes are made they are made in front of people they have not worked with for a long period of time."

Interview extract

"..feels it is unreasonable of the employees to do the job without any proper training because the employee is held responsible when things go wrong."

Interview extract

The workshop and interview data and the comments written on some questionnaires indicate that a sizeable amount of the training in the retail sector is informal, carried out by department managers, supervisors and work colleagues. However, from discussions with shop workers it would appear that training by managers, supervisors and work colleagues is extremely variable in terms of quality, style, timing, material support and so on. Training by non-professional staff trainers led to situations where people in the same store reported very different training experiences. A not untypical situation is 1 member of staff in an interview reporting a *'demonstration by trainer'* but another member of staff in the same store reporting she *'did not enjoy training as the other girl (doing the training) only started a couple of days before her and didn't really know the job properly'.*

In discussions with shop workers it was said that some training is carried out by managers and supervisors who lacked the training and resources to understand the need for sensitivity in training situations. Badly designed and badly tutored vocational education and training activity can cause retail staff a great deal of unnecessary anxiety. For example, in one workshop it was said that some shop workers are so worried about training (fear of failure in front of peers is important) that they will go to great lengths to avoid training sessions. Some staff would take 'sick leave' or even leave the job completely so as to avoid being embarrassed during training.

Teaching methods

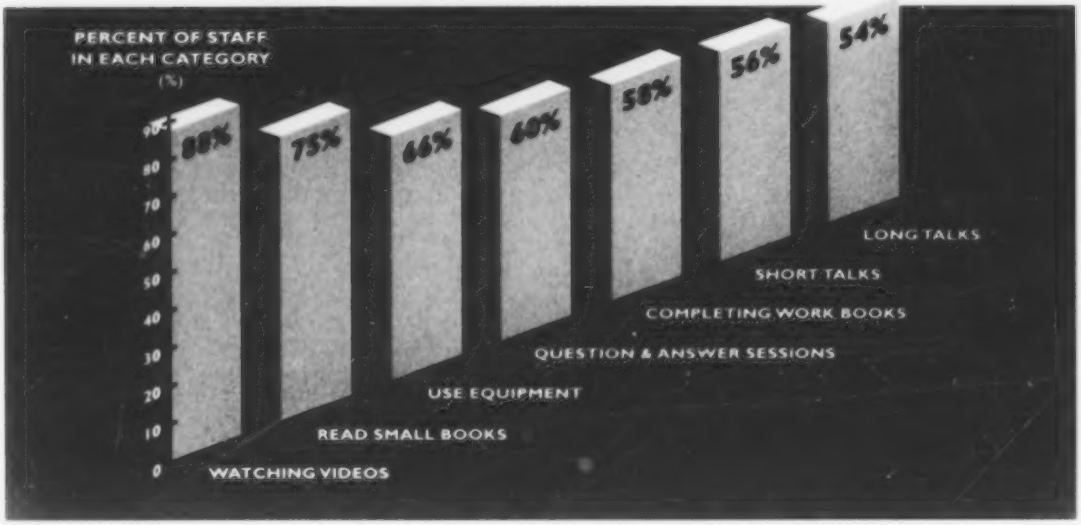
3.8

Discussions with shop workers revealed that a range of teaching methods and aids were used during training sessions. The most common were:

- watching videos,
- reading small books, leaflets,
- listening to 10 minute talks,
- listening to half - hour talks,
- using equipment, e.g. tills, computer, deli machinery,
- question and answer sessions,
- filling in work books.

Shop workers were asked on the questionnaire to say which of these different methods they had experienced. The most frequently reported were training videos and reading small books and leaflets. For example, 88% of shop workers were given training videos to watch and 75% reported reading small books and leaflets. *(Figure 25)*

Figure 25 ***The most commonly reported teaching methods***



"Videos . . . boring and condescending, not useful in my work."

Interview extract

Over 60% of the shop workers in our survey said training videos dominated their training activities.

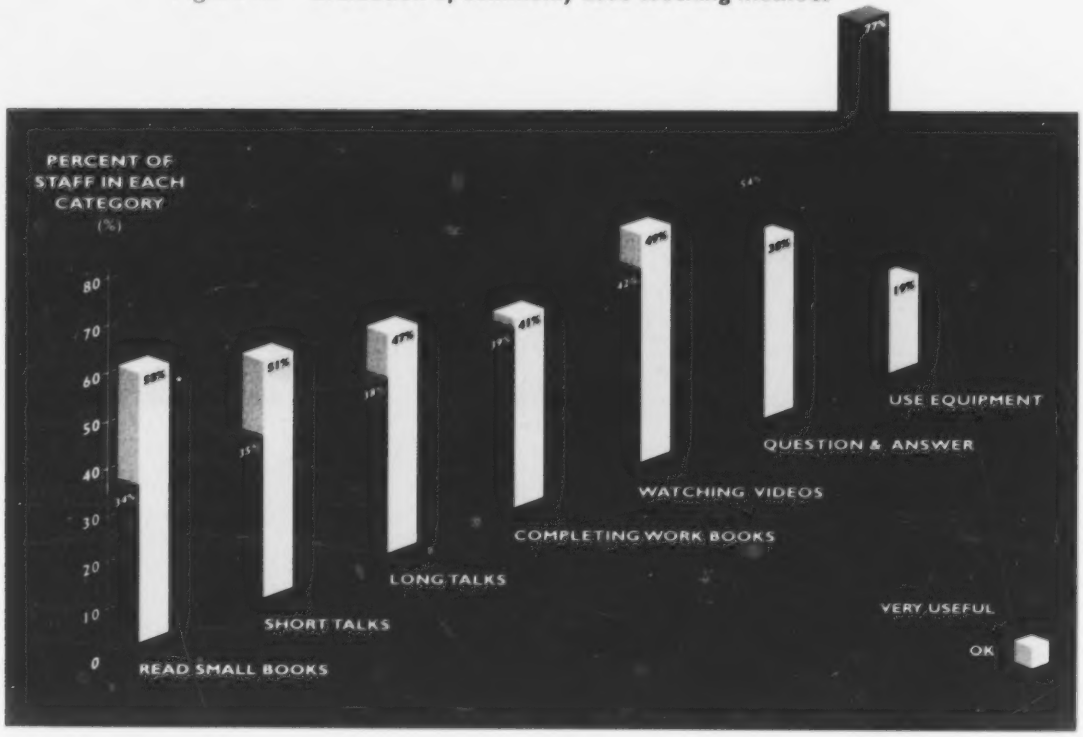
3.9

"Not treated like adults, videos over the top, not true to life, played by actors in an empty store."

Interview extract

Figure 26 illustrates shop workers' assessment of the value of the range of training methods to which they were exposed. The most popular form of vocational education and training was, not surprisingly, the hands-on use of equipment. Most training methods were described neutrally as *'OK'* by a majority of the sample in our survey. Although training videos were by far the most frequently mentioned training method shop workers do not appear to regard training videos as particularly useful. Of those experiencing training videos only 42% said training videos were *'very useful'. (Figure 26)* It should be noted that when training was dominated by poor quality videos the proportion evaluating the induction training as *'very useful'* plummets from the sample average of about 40% to a low 10%.

Figure 26 ***Evaluation of commonly used teaching methods***



Certification of training

3.10

"It would be encouraging to people after they have worked on a department... and their manager thinks they have done well to give a certificate or something."

Interview extract

Shop workers value certificates highly. They are tangible 'proof' that they have gained new skills and knowledge. However, approximately two thirds of our sample did not possess any recognised certificates for their training activities.

"There should be full training on all departments and some recognition - certificate at the end of it."

Interview extract

The most frequently mentioned certificate was for food hygiene training. Although 645 shop workers in our sample reported having a food hygiene certificate a substantially greater number, approximately 1150, had undertaken this type of training. This means that about half the shop workers undertaking food hygiene training were not awarded a certificate (it may be, of course, that they were not following a certificated programme of food hygiene training). When shop workers were awarded certificates the proportion saying the vocational education and training was *'very useful'* rose sharply. For example, 73% of the staff given a food hygiene certificate said the training was *'very useful'* but only 50% of the staff not given a certificate for this training described it in this way. As the paragraph on the S/NVQs noted, shop workers with experience of S/NVQs tend to be more positive about their training than the sample as a whole. Thus, it is evident that shop workers value their training most if it is linked to a recognised (not merely an in-company) certificate.

Conclusion

3.11

The chapter shows that a large number of factors affect shop workers' judgements of their training. For example, the quality of the trainers is very important and using unqualified staff has severe limitations and is not good practice. Our data also indicates that excellent trainers cannot compensate for company and store training cultures which are not wholly committed to delivering good quality staff training. Training videos are increasingly common and can obviously be effective in some circumstances. The majority of our sample did not find them very useful.

The most popular ways of learning appear to be the interactive question and answer sessions and hands-on training. It is probably not possible to avoid some of the front-loading of training but, as the survey demonstrates it is not always very productive. There is considerable unmet demand for up-date and on-going training. The training culture created by companies and their store managers strongly influences what training is delivered, how much training is delivered, and the way their staff perceive their training.

Chapter 4

Equal access to vocational education and training?

Introduction

4.1

A number of studies have shown that some groups of employees have greater access to vocational training than others. For example, the *Training in Britain* report showed that managers and professionals, the higher paid and the already better educationally qualified, receive more vocational education and training than other groups. In short, employers tend to give more training to those who are already better educated and trained than the majority of employees. The *Training in Britain* report also showed that men receive more training than women and that full-time workers receive more training than part-time workers. Two of the most distinctive characteristics of the retailing work force are the large number of women employed in the sector and the high level of part-time working in the sector.

In our survey we attempted to examine the issue of ethnicity and training but the number of people with ethnic minority backgrounds was too small to allow us to comment meaningfully. In this context it should be noted that the *IMS* report states that the number of people from ethnic minority backgrounds employed by large company retailers is often below the figures necessary to adequately represent the ethnic minorities in their local labour force. Although the numbers in our survey are small our data does suggest, however, that whereas ethnicity did not affect the amount of training shop workers received, in some instances it did change some of their evaluations of the training. In our survey over 200 different training courses were identified but no shop worker reported any race awareness training. Further research is needed in this field.

With these points in mind this chapter examines the extent to which our survey showed there was equality of access to training in the sector.

Gender and training

4.2

In the UK, women currently make up almost 50% of the nation's labour force. Between 1971 and 1989, 9 in 10 of the newly created jobs in the economy have been taken by women and this trend is expected to continue until the year 2001. (*Employment Gazette* 1990 April). Women, however, are even more important to retailing where they already constitute about 62% of the labour force – most working part-time. Many women in retailing have had a number of years out of paid work, frequently to raise pre-school children. Women returners bring into the workplace considerable social and work skills but at the same time they also re-enter work with specific training needs. They frequently identify a number of common problems such as a background of negative school experiences, rusty qualifications and dated occupational skills. (McGivney 1993) One consequence of this background is that the overwhelming majority of women returners say they want vocational education and training as they re-enter the workplace. (Clarke 1991)
In summary, women are the mainstay of retailing but they often have backgrounds which create specific training needs.

4.3

Our survey showed that in overall terms the same proportion of men and women, about 60%, received 5 days or less total training from their current employer. However, this similarity in the total amount of training concealed gender inequalities which emerged when the amount of training men and women shop workers received was examined in conjunction with occupation and length of service. As observed in Chapter 1, women shop workers tend to have longer periods of service than their male colleagues. As the majority of shop workers received most of their training when they began to work with their current employer this means the training given to women has to sustain them for longer than their male counterparts.

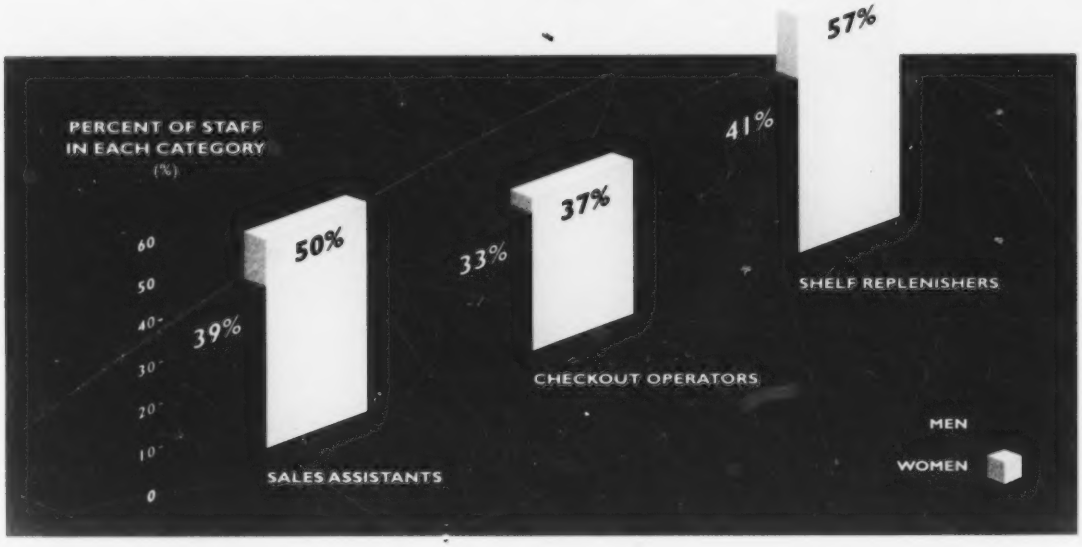
Figure 27 shows the average amount of VET per year of service received by men and women in 10 occupational groupings. In 8 out of 10 of these occupational groupings men appear to have received more VET per year of service than women shop workers. In *Figure 27* it can be seen, for example, that male shelf replenishers and display assistants received about 5.2 hours' training per year of service compared with just over 3.7 hours for women doing the same job. Also, male supervisors appear to have received considerably more training per year of service as female supervisors. Only in two occupational groups, those of Cash Office/Clerical and Warehouse/ Stock Control, did women receive more VET than their male counterparts. The relatively small number of men working as delicatessen staff, some with high levels of VET, distorts the average.

Figure 27 ***Training per year of service: gender and occupational groups***

4.4

Gender differences can also be seen in the different proportions of men and women in each of each of the 3 main occupational groups of sales assistant, checkout operator and shelf replenisher who received only half a day, or less, training per year of service. *Figure 28* reveals that in each of these 3 occupations there are more women than men confined to this relatively low level of training.

Figure 28 ***Gender and percent of staff in 3 occupations receiving only up to half a day's training per year of service***



Part-time working and training

4.5

Another defining characteristic of retail work is the high level of part-time working. A recent ***Low Pay Network*** (1994 March) report registered a substantial fall in the proportion of full-time jobs and a rise in the number working part-time. This leads the Low Pay Network to suggest that almost half the jobs in the UK could be part-time in 10 years time. In this respect the UK retailers are already well out in front of the rest of British industry.

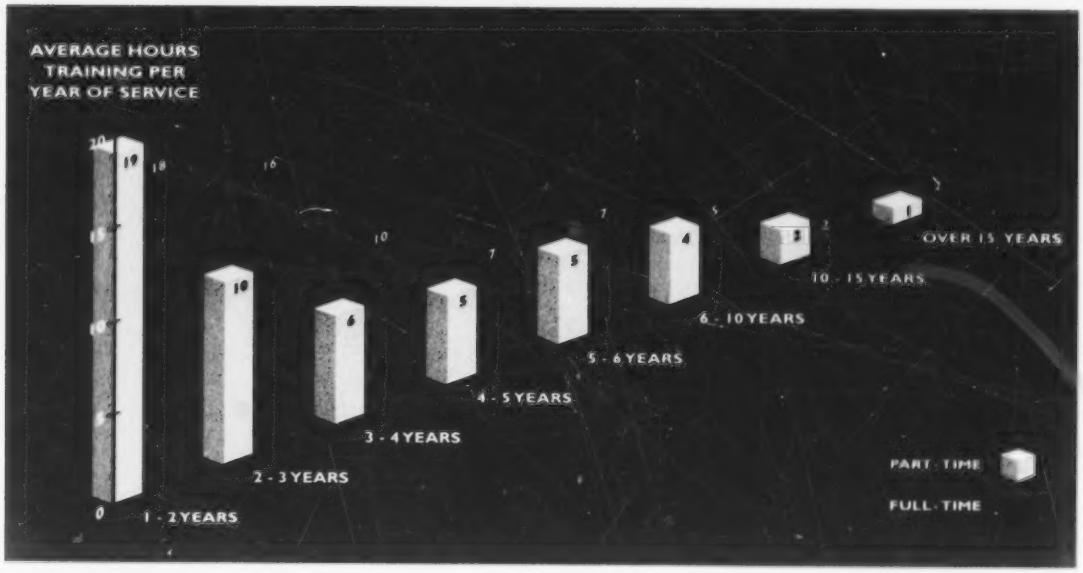
The UK retail sector demonstrates a long term, pronounced and recently accelerating shift towards part-time working. In 1961, 28% of retailing jobs were part-time but by 1971 this had risen to 40%. In 1981, the level of part-time working was 44% only to register another steep rise by 1994 when it reached 50%. Between 1961 and March 1994, part-time working in retailing rose by 81% but part-time working by women workers grew even faster – up by 87% in the same period. In addition to the overall increase in the level of part-time working there is considerable evidence to show that the average hours per week in retail sector jobs is falling. A ***Low Pay Network*** survey (1994 March) found that the supermarket vacancies in one part of the country offered jobs with an average of 11.4 hours per week.

4.6

As all shop workers are expected to do their jobs efficiently and safely and to provide customers with the same high quality of service, part-time and full-time staff should receive the same levels of training. Moreover, as part-time and full-time shop workers have similar aspirations concerning job mobility, career progression and personal development they should receive similar levels of training. In our survey, however, part-time working appears to effect the amount of training shop workers received. Part-time shop workers (using the Department of Employment's definition of part-time as *'not more than 30 hours a week'*) tended to receive less training per year of service than their full-time counterparts.

Figure 29 shows the average amount of VET per year of service for part-time and full-time shop workers. It can be seen from this *Figure*, for example, that part-time workers with 2-3 years' service received an average of 10 hours' training per year of service compared with 16 hours' training per year of service for full-time workers with the same level of service.

Figure 29 ***Training per year of service: full-time and part-time shop workers***



Conclusion

4.7

The total amounts of training received by shop workers are small but even within these our survey identifies differences on the basis of gender and part-time working. This confirms other research in this field such as the *Training in Britain* and *IMS* reports. The *IMS* comments, for example, that part-time workers are far more likely to only receive induction and basic job training and *"women appeared to fare worse with regard to training and promotion because they occupied most basic grade and part-time positions."* (*IMS* 1993:124)

Women shop workers are particularly important for the retail sector and they currently make up about 62% of retailing's labour force. However, our survey indicates that women shop workers, generally received less training than men and part-time shop workers received less training than their full-time counterparts.

There is considerable evidence indicating that women in general re-entering the labour market after a career break often do so at a lower grade and status than they previously held. They also often take up part-time work whereas before they had full-time jobs (Payne 1991). This pattern appears to be repeated in retailing.

The age profile of our sample suggests that many of the women entering retailing do so after a career break and they often take up part-time work. They are confined to lower status and lower graded jobs. Our sample shows women are under-represented in supervisory and managerial jobs and many felt their training has not enhanced their promotion prospects or given them transferable skills.

Women starting work in retailing after a career break bring into the sector previously gained work skills and considerable social, domestic and caring type skills, which are heavily utilised in the workplace. The provision of good quality training in the sector would enable employers to make more effective use of women employees and help women employees to realise their full potential.

Chapter 5

Vocational education and training and employee development

Introduction

5.1

The predominant concern of this Report so far has been with assessing the nature and extent of the training that shop workers receive from their current employer and with their views on the value and usefulness of this training. This final chapter, however, focuses on the training aspirations of shop workers with particular reference to the kind of vocational education and training that they would like to have as a continuing part of their working lives. It argues for VET which combines job training with training that provides transferable skills and encourages personal growth and development.

Suggestions for future training

5.2

A number of retail employees participating in our survey were interviewed and asked to indicate *'what training would make you get up in the morning and make you look forward to going to work?'* These interviews were undertaken, it will be remembered, by their shop floor colleagues rather than members of the University research team. The responses were varied and imaginative and can be grouped into three main categories. There were, first, those suggestions that related directly to the job or task responsibilities of the particular individual. The job specific list (as we termed the first category) included suggestions such as refresher courses on checkouts; cash office or any office training; training in consumer rights; new aspects of the job; dealing with staff.

5.3

The second category of responses related to the wider occupational role of the employees. A considerable number of employees were clearly interested in VET provisions which went well beyond the specific tasks of their job, yet still addressed issues pertaining to the retail sector. These suggestions (which we have labelled 'industry related') indicate an interest and commitment to the retail industry and demonstrate a desire to understand more about the nature and direction of the retail sector. Suggestions from this second category included:

- ability to run different departments and to have a general knowledge of all aspects of the shop;
- knowledge about the management side of the store;
- training that provided greater responsibility and initiatives;
- training that shows how decisions of major importance are made.

By far the largest number of issues in this second category related to employees' desire for increased responsibility at work. Whether these suggestions are a reaction against the narrower and job specific training commonly experienced by employees is not clear. But they do express a desire for greater involvement and understanding of the company and also of the retail sector.

5.4

"Finally, we also need to dispel the myth that all training and skills, or aptitude development, is only important in relation to paid employment. Personal development training and the opportunity to enhance skills, pursue interests or develop aptitudes is an important quality of life issue. As working people we have the right to further education and training as an end in itself, irrespective of its employment or career implications."

Training for the Future, Usdaw, 1991.

The third category of suggestions for future training is perhaps the most interesting. They include suggestions which are not work-related. The common theme in these suggestions is the link with personal development and they result from an ambition, interest or hobby or are simply the dream of a particular individual. These suggestions we have called 'employee development' proposals. Common to all the suggestions in this third category is the willingness of employees to participate in some form of learning around subject areas of interest to them. These include topics to do with: foreign languages, leisure classes; such as history, health provision, creative writing, writing books and poetry.

A number of issues relating to 'employee development' provision were not explored. It would for example, have been interesting to know whether employees were prepared to use their own time (or part of their own time) and to financially contribute to the learning. Above all, it would have been interesting to explore the employees' views of, first, the relationship between participation in 'employee development' and increased effectiveness at work and, secondly, the link between 'employee development' courses and VET (and S/NVQs in particular).

5.5

In addition to these responses there is one area that our respondents did not raise with the research team, but which we feel cannot be ignored. This relates to literacy and numeracy.

The Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit *(ALBSU)* for example, has estimated that 13% of Britain's adults have difficulties in using the basic skills of reading, writing, spelling or basic numeracy (*NIACE* 1993). A further *ALBSU* report, *A Nation's Neglect*, (1989) estimates that 4 in 10 adults in Britain's linguistic minorities have difficulty with written or spoken English. Literacy and basic skills are necessary pre-requisites for safe, effective working and also for employees to fully realise their potential. It should be noted that problems with literacy and numeracy are often not the result of failing at school but due to jobs being so designed that they do not demand the use of literacy and numeracy skills and as a consequence these skills decline.

5.6

"Serious on-going training provision for working people is still too often seen and delivered as a privilege rather than an opportunity or a right."

Usdaw 1991

Our research suggests that the desire and commitment towards learning by employees in the retail sector is far greater than the current VET provision within the industry is able to satisfy. Our evidence of employees' VET wishes and aspirations suggests no reason why the retail sector should stand apart from the Confederation of British Industry aim (*World Class Targets* 1991), of investing in *"each individual to build up the knowledge, skills and understandings necessary for their chosen path in both life and work"*.

From job training to employee development

5.7

The House of Lords' Select Committee into VET (1990) states *'there has to be a change in the cultural perception of training and the way it is carried out if more employers are to be encouraged to become good trainers'* (NIACE 1993 :14) There are now many imaginative examples from a variety of sectors that show how VET can be broadened and deepened.

Responses to the recent *Industrial Society Training Trends* (1994) questionnaire indicate that the majority of employers consider themselves to be committed to becoming 'learning organisations'. A minority (37%) had either short written statements or full written policy implementing this strategy. The *IS* survey shows that respondents are realistic about how far they have got: *"There appears to be no firm belief that organisations are already 'learning organisations'. 30% of our sample believe that they are, while, 40% feel that they are not. A minority of organisations (44%) have introduced the learning organisation concept into selected areas. However, more than half of all respondents are committed to becoming learning organisations in the future, and only 21% have not yet considered the concept. Only 2% believe it to be 'a passing fad'"* (1994:26). The reasons given for adopting a commitment to becoming a 'learning organisation' include commitments to quality, competitors becoming 'learning organisations', recruitment or retention difficulties and the Government's 'Investors in People' (*IiP*) scheme.

Usdaw provided the research team with examples of a number of initiatives to develop the 'learning organisations concept'. One employer, for example, had turned their training centre into an open learning centre that could be used by employees to develop non-job related skills, as well as being used as a centre for job training. Other examples of initiatives include the provision of literacy and numeracy training and the Employee Development Funds negotiated and jointly administered by employers and trade unions. There are a growing number of household name companies involved in these schemes, often modelled on or drawing from the Ford (UK) EDAP experience (Payne, Forrester & Ward 1993).

Conclusion

5.8

Unfortunately, our survey showed little evidence in the retail sector of the change in the '*cultural perception of training*' that the House of Lords' Inquiry says is necessary to transform VET in Britain. It is sometimes suggested that the retail sector is an area where people come to work precisely because they do not like training. Our survey shows that there are many difficulties or obstacles to VET in retailing but shop workers' lack of aspirations for VET cannot be said to be one of them. Indeed the problem is that their practical experiences of training to-date is likely to have resulted in low expectations about future training and of the possibilities flowing from it. These negative attitudes need to be tackled urgently if 'learning organisations' strategies are to be successful.

Employee Development schemes offer effective ways of developing the 'learning organisation'. The evidence suggests these schemes are not only advantageous to the employee but also to the employer. Thus, a recent report from the Policy Studies Institute (1993) stated "*a work force that is more able and willing to learn, more flexible and adaptable, more committed and motivated not only leads to better company performance but can also improve industrial relations and reduce absenteeism*." There is, therefore, much to gain for both retail workers and retail employers in the 'learning organisation' concept. There is also much to lose if the retail sector remains outside 'the skills revolution' that all agree Britain requires. It is time that the retail employers again took the lead and sat down, in partnership with shop workers and their trade union, to extend and develop the vocational education and training provision throughout the sector.

Appendix 1

Research methodology

Introduction

The bulk of research into VET in the UK tends to focus on Government policy or on employer strategies and practices. The motivations, aspirations and real-life experiences of employees are mostly ignored or sidelined. This project was designed to counter this; it is employee-centred, based on research into the experiences and attitudes of non-managerial, non-supervisory retail employees. The two key methods used were a detailed questionnaire and semi-structured interviews.

Questionnaire

The project working group decided that if the questionnaire was to be useful in eliciting relevant information from shop workers about their experiences and attitudes towards VET, then it should be designed by shop workers. Therefore, a major educational workshop was organised with Usdaw representatives working in retail stores around the country. Participants at this workshop exchanged good and bad experiences of VET, discussed their expectations of good quality VET and their training aspirations. On the basis of this workshop and discussions with employers, Usdaw officers and lay representatives and training professionals in the industry, a draft questionnaire was devised and piloted. A questionnaire of 107 questions was finally designed on the basis of the feedback received from the pilot. The questionnaire was distributed nation-wide, between April and December 1993.

In those companies actively participating in the survey, (they were given guarantees of complete confidentiality) the individual members of staff to be sent a questionnaire were selected at random from the payroll. The other main source of the questionnaires was from Usdaw. Many full-time officers and lay representatives helped to distribute the questionnaire and made the arrangements for its collection. Approximately 6000 questionnaires were distributed and 1974 were completed and returned.

The majority (70%) of these were from women workers and 59% of these worked part-time (62% of workers in the sector as a whole are women, of whom 63% are part-time). The questionnaire is a sizeable one and it is the only independently conducted sector-wide survey of employees of its type.

However, it is skewed heavily towards supermarket staff (the bulk of Usdaw's retail members) and towards those employed in large companies. About three quarters of the individuals taking part in our survey work in large supermarkets and 1 in 10 work in small supermarkets. Just under 1 in 10 of the survey sample work in department stores with the rest coming from a variety of outlets including clothes shops, butchers, bakers, greengrocers and chemists etc. Retail staff working for at least 57 employers (many people chose not to report the name of their company) returned the questionnaire.

Interviews

In order to supplement data gathered from the questionnaire it was agreed that interviews would be carried out with shop workers. It is possible that the use of shop workers to interview colleagues made the qualitative data collected more valuable and reliable than it would have been if we had used university researchers as interviewers. Once again, a number of workshops were planned to train union and non-union staff working in retail stores in basic interviewing skills. For a variety of reasons we were able to hold only 3 workshops, and 15 interviewers eventually carried out 115 face-to-face interviews using a prepared interview schedule.

Results

At the beginning of the project the Union was keen to involve as many retail employers as possible in the information gathering part of the research. The research team, therefore, after discussions with Union negotiating officers, contacted key personnel in the head offices of 34 of the UK's major food and non-food employers. Each company was sent a 2 page outline of the project with a request for a brief meeting to explain the benefits of the research and our requirements. A similar outline summary was distributed by the British Retail Consortium and a press release about the project was used by 2 trade journals. Formal meetings were eventually held with 15 major employers and a presentation was made to a seminar of training executives and managers. In spite of all this activity, the promise of complete confidentiality and of company-specific reports, only 7 employers (mainly food retailers) agreed to participate fully in the project. Most of these companies agreed to give expenses and paid release for their staff to attend day-long workshops to discuss the project, the questionnaire, the interview schedule and to be shown how to interview their work colleagues.

The indifference of most retailing employers was offset by the enthusiasm of the Union, and considerable effort was taken during the first phase of the project to encourage an awareness and 'ownership' of the project by Usdaw officers and members. Many meetings were held with Union negotiating committees from retail companies and formal presentations were made to the National Women's Committee and the Union's Divisional Training Officers. Reports were prepared for the Union's monthly journal and the full research team ran an information stall at the Union's Annual Delegate Meeting (ADM).

All this activity, together with the involvement of Union activists in conducting interviews, designing and distributing questionnaires, tended to blur the traditional distinction between 'active' researchers and 'passive' trade unionists, and created a real collaborative partnership.

The survey has several characteristics which affect the results.

- It favours the training experiences of staff working for large supermarkets which play a dominant role in the retail sector. However, the survey returns of non-supermarket employees show there are more similarities than differences between their training experiences and those of supermarket employees.
- It errs on the positive side of shop workers' vocational training experiences. This is because the greater the relevance of the survey to the individual receiving a questionnaire the more likely it will be completed. In other words, shop workers receiving training are more likely to complete and return a questionnaire than those with no training.
- Small and medium sized retail companies were not adequately represented in this survey of shop workers' training experiences.
- Those companies actively participating in the survey were mainly from the up-market side of retailing and these companies generally have more extensive training policies and practices.

References

- Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit, 1990, *Annual Report 1989/1990*
- Clarke, K. 1991, *Women and Training: A Review*, Manchester, Equal Opportunities Commission
- Commission of the European Community, 1992, *Employment in Europe*, Luxembourg, CEC
- Confederation of British Industry, 1989, *Towards a Skills Revolution: Report Of The Vocational Education And Training Task Force*, London, CBI
- Department of Employment, 1989, *Training in Britain, Employers' Activities*, London, HMSO
- Department of Employment, 1990 April 'Labourforce Outlook to 2001', Employment Gazette:186–198, London, HMSO
- Finegold, D. 1992, *Breaking out of the Low Skill Equilibrium*, National Commission on Education Briefing 5, London, NCE
- Glynn, S. & Gospel, H. 1993, *Britain's Low Skill Equilibrium: A Problem of Demand*, Industrial Relations JournalVol No: 242 pp113–125
- Keep, E. 1989 'A *Training Scandal*' in K. Sissons (ed) Personnel Management in Britain, Oxford: Blackwell

References

- Low Pay Network, 1994, *Briefings*, Manchester, Low Pay Network
- McGivney, V. 1993, *Women, Education and Training*, Guildford, Biddles
- National Institute Adult Continuing Education, 1993, *The Learning Imperative*: A policy discussion paper on National Education and Training Targets and Adult Learners, Leicester, NIACE
- Payne, J. 1991, *Women, Training and the Skills Shortage: The case for public investment*, London, Policy Studies Institute
- Payne, J. Forrester, K. Ward, 1993, *Adult Learners at Work*, Leeds, University of Leeds
- The Industrial Society, 1994, *Training Trends 12*, London, The Industrial Society
- *The NVQ Monitor*, 1993-4:Winter, London, National Council for Vocational Qualifications
- Toye, J. Spilsbury, M. Davies, C. 1993, *Employment Work and Training in the Retail Sector*, Brighton, Institute of Manpower Studies
- Usdaw, 1991, *Training For the Future – An Usdaw View*, Manchester, Usdaw

K. P. Forrester • J. James • C. Thorne
Department of Adult Continuing Education
University of Leeds

Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers
188 Wilmslow Road, Manchester M14 6LJ

Published by USDAW • ISBN No. 0-907644074 • January 1995
Designed and produced by Clark and Clark Design and Marketing Tel. 0161-445 2162